Practical Discourses

UPON THE

PARABLE

OF THE

Ten Uirgins.

BEING

A serious Call and Admonition to Watchfulness and Diligence in preparing for Death and Judgment.

By BENJAMIN COLMAN, M. A. Late Preacher at BATH in Somerletshire.

LONDON,

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but may inkerent in your yrich and spiritual Panelle it is, and an g Suiger, bordering on Touch and Indg-THOSE to Whom Divine Providence hath set Me in a PASTORAL ing in the orr a and I A we to my bed to frem'd them as to reach Mens Many and

My Honoured and Beloved Friends,

Do here present You with some Discourses, which it pleased God to make acceptable and profitable to Many in the Preaching, who also then earnestly wish'd them made Publick. The Publishing them now may feem too late a Compliance with such Desires; but I had a double Difficulty to break thro', Scil. an Unwillingues to appear in Print in an Age as censorious as it is polite, and also a Preference in my own Mind of some Select Subjects, which I have occasionally discours'd of unto You. I had at last begun such a Collection, and intended to have prevented those of my Friends with an Offer of fome of my Labours, whom I had had the Pain sometimes of denying. But as I cou'd not but difcern the Inclination of the Most to be to the Ensuing Treatise, so I presently judg'd my own Heart, and yielded entirely to their Choice. hoping that Heaven directs it, and that 'twill be found abundantly the best.

I desire humbly to thank God for the Acceptance that my Labours find among You: O that they may truly profit as well as please; approve themfelves to Enlighten'd Minds and Serious Hearts 4 reach the Conscience of the Secure and Carnal, and have an abiding Influence on the Life! That the Word may not only be received with

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Joy, transiently touching the Affections for the

present, but may take root in you.

A very rich and fruitful Parable it is, and an awakening Subject, bordering on Death and Judgment, the Coming of Christ, and the Eternal World. Medications on these Last Things, and most Important Concerns of Man, are truly awful and affecting in themselves; and I have, to my best Skill, so fram'd them as to reach Mens Fears, and perswade them by the Terrors of the Lord.

If these will not move Men, what can? If the Arrows of God do not enter, the Heart is Stone indeed; if Flashes from the Skies will not make Men start, 'tis to be fear'd their Eyes are out; and they are deaf indeed whom the Thunder of God and the Midnight Cry don't alarm: The same that shall awake the Dead Another

Day.

God forbid, That they whom these Discourses found among the Foolish Virgins should still be lest so! Or that the Wise among us should be no wiser or better for them! That they whom these Sermons find fast asleep shou'd altogether remain so, that the sumbring Christian should doze on yet, or the watchful not be quicken'd by what he here reads! Give Instruction to a Wise Man, and he will be yet wifer; teach a just Man, and he will increase in Learning.

I have this also in my Eye and Hope, that God may please to bless what is here written for the Saving Good of your Children, and the risen Touth among us: That they may learn betimes that they have a Holy Saviour to serve, and to prepare to meet, and precious Immortal Souls to save; and that these Things do call for their First Care. To These, and for them I principally write, to awaken in them (if God prosper it with his Blessing) serious Thoughts of

The Epiftle Dedicatory.

Denth and Eternity, and put 'em on an early redeeming of their Time; warning them not to walk in the Way of their Heart, and in the Sight of their Eyes, because God will bring them into fudgment. Therefore I wou'd entreat Parents and Masters to pursue the Design of this Book, in the Discharge of their Duty to such as are under their Watch and Care, by inculcating this upon them — That they have a Work to do, and an Account to give; a God to serve and glorify,

and in a little time to appear before.

This also will necessarily lead 'em to think of the Bonds they are under by Baptism, the timely Recognition whereof a faithful Parent's Soul will be earnestly set on; as indeed the Hearts of the Faithful Pastors throughout the Land are; which gives a happy Prospect of our excelling (if God incline the Hearts of the rifing Generation to his Fear) in that truly Noble, Necessary and Holy Piece of Church Order, the not resting in a Tacit and Virtual Owning our Baptism, nor in a Formality of Confirmation, of no Solemnity nor Significancy, as to the real attaining the excellent Ends proposed from it. I am glad I can tell the World that this (so far as it is done at all) is done Expresty, Solemnly, and Publickly, in the Face of our Assemblies for Worship; and I shou'd be greatly pleas'd to fee the Congregation rife up reverently at the awful Action; wherein they wou'd look as the Lord's Witnesses in what is passing, as well as seem to show a ferious Remembrance of their own Covenanting to be the Lord's. I beseech both Parents and Children to lay to Heart what is said of this Matter, in the last Discourse on the First Verse of the Parable: For this happy instituting our Youth, and their regular passing from their Infant Church-State to their Adult, wou'd (thro' the Bleffing of God) be of wonwonderful Advantage to them all their Life after, and open the Way fairly for a due Exercise of

Discipline and the Pastoral Watch.

I have no more to add, but my earnest Request of your servent Daily Prayers for Me, and the Success of my Ministry among You; assuring You of my continual Prayers for You and Yours, to that God who is able to keep and present You fault-less before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy, that he would sanctify You wholly, and preserve You blameless to the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For what is our Hope, or Joy, or Crown of rejorcing? Are not even Ye, in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Coming? I am

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Bolton, July 20. 17.06.

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READER.

Apologize for the Subject chosen, so Grave, Weighty and Awful as it is, nor for the plain, familiar, serious and affectionate Manner of treating it. It does not look Decent to dress and adorn One's self, to pay a Visit to the Grave. The Subject is Sable, and the Tire shou'd not be Light. It requires no Art to speak of Death and Judgment as we ought, the more simply and naked these are expos'd, they look the more Natural, they sound the more Awful; and the Preacher seems the more in Earnest.

Nor shall I go about to excuse it, that so little New is said here; the which were I vain enough to affect, yet it may be wou'd be found Impossible on such Practical Heads, except in Method, Stile, Allusions, &c. Indeed it is some Check to me, that our Age does already abound with Discourses admirably labour'd on every practical Point of Religion: but I am apt to fear latent Pride and Vanity in such Thoughts, when they obstruct our being cheerfully serviceable in our proper Spheres; for as it becomes every One to be humbly thankful for what he has, so also may it, modestly to use it and hope to do Good, tho he fall incomparably short of the Elegance of some Mens Thoughts, and the Strength of another's Reasoning. Minute Things have their Use in the World, and so have the less sightly too.

I suppose none will censure it, in a Treatise of this Nature, that I have not enter'd into the Mazes of some controverted Points, but only offer'd a few plain Scriptures that assert the Truth: but it looks more

faulty that many Things feem repeated in divers Places, which might all have been reduced to one Head; to which I can only say, That this is almost unavoidable in a Parable; which I hope consults the better the Reader's Spiritual Profit, by parcelling out the Treasure it contains, here a little and there a little, and supplying in one Place what is wanting in another. I must confess the Parable bas led me into some Arguments I bad no Lift to preach or write of, fave only for the Cake of the General Scope of it; which certainly is as bigbly Useful and Necessary as can be possibly calculated for Mankind. Therefore in the Points which border on the Popish Fopperies and the Doctrine of Super-errogation, I have studied to be General and make only transient Reflections; not conceiving there to be any Imminent Danger of such Heresies taking among us.

There is one Liberty so Natural to me, that I never seer clear of it, which is, the Alluding to Passages and Expressions of Scripture, the which an unwary Reader may mistake me to intend for Proof or direct Explication, and so think them impertinent, as then indeed they would be. Finally, What is borrow'd I have mark'd (') as far as I cou'd remember; and if in this I have any where fail'd of doing Justice to any One, 'tis the fault of Memory and not of Will: for not being written with a Design to print, it is not possible all the Exactness should be observed, which else might have been. As it is I offer it, and pray God to give his Blessing with it, and make it savingly prositable to Souls, which should be the last Desire, as it will be the abundant Reward, both of him that Writes

and of them that Read.

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Practical Discourses

ONTHE

Parable of the Ten Virgins, &c.

St. MATTH. XXV. 1.--13.

1. Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto Ten Virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

2. And five of them were wife, and five were

foolifb.

3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them.

4. But the wife took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5. While the Bridegroom tarried they all slum-

bred and slept.

- 6. And at midnight there was a cry made, behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.
- 7. Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.
- 8. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

B 9. But

9. But the wife answered saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves.

10. And while they went to buy the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the door was shut.

11. Afterward came also the other Virgins, say-

ing, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto

you, I know you not.

. day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

is plainly given us in the Close of it, fail, to put us on a constant, careful, exact Watch, lest the Summons of Death surprize us unprepar'd. Which also is the Admonition our Saviour had been pressing in the preceding Chapter, but more directly he speaks there of the precise Time of the Judgment to come, which God keeps secret to himself, and hid from us, that we may be always on our Watch. The same or like Argument is here further prosecuted in a Parable.

As to the Parables of our Saviour in general, they are Similitudes taken from known Customs and Actions of Men, and made use of to inform us in Spiritual Doctrines. According as they are managed, they are either a familiar and easy, or an obscure and covert way of communicating one's Mind. It was a usual Mode of Teaching with the Jewish Dectors, and we have several of

their

their Parables to their Disciples in our Hands to this Day. It is obvious that Spiritual Truths may be very plainly deliver'd in this Allusive Way: And when they are so, there is this Advantage, That they strangely draw Mens Artention, and fix on the Memory while they take the Fancy: For we find People will listen to a Story or Example in a Sermon, who sit very careless while the Doctrines and Laws of Christ are more simply preached. Yet our Lord tells us, that He sometimes used them in Punishment of Mens Obduracy and Hardness of Heart, who had despised the more plain Discourses he had often made to 'em'.

The Antiquity of Parables, and the Severity of this Mode of Speech, is famous from the Days of Jotham †, who thus stung his Country-men worse than any Wasp cou'd, and slew away as he had done.

It requires good Thought and Judgment throughly to take the Sense of a Parable. Panciful Minds are very apt abusively to over-strain them, unreasonably to twist and squeeze them, in order to force some Divine Truth out of every minute Circumstance in them. This is to press the Stalk with the Grapes; which wou'd but soak up some of the good Wine, and spoil the rest. And yet in Popular Discourses, I believe we may easily be too shy and starch, if we bind our selves only to the first Scope of the Story, and wholly pass over many curious Hints in it, which are both for Use and Ornament.

The Design of This Parable, I said, was to put us on preparing and getting ready for Death and Judgment. For this End our Lord here al-

^{*} Marth. 13. 13, 14. + Judg. 9. 8, 21.

ludes unto the Custom of those Days in their Marriages, which it shou'd seem were in the Night, the Bridegroom and the Bride being attended by their felect Friends, He by Ten Young-Men, suppose, and She by as many Virgins. At the appointed Hour the Bridegroom was conducted by his Friends to the Bride's House, the Bride-Maids, on Notice of his Approach, going forth with Lamps to receive him. In Allusion unto this our Lord compares Himself to the Bridgeroom ; those that profess Faith in him are the Virgins; the Lamps are their visible Profession; the Oil fignifies the Truth of Grace in the Soul; the Wife are the Sincere and Upright; the Foolifb are Wicked Christians and Hypocrites: The Bridegroom's tarrying means Christ's delaying his Second Coming, or the calling us off by Death; the Slumber of all fignifies how remiss the very best Christians are too often in their Watch; the Cry at Midnight warns us of the unexpected Call of Christ when we least dream of it; their erifing and trimming their Lamps admonishes us of the Alarm which the Summons of Death gives to every one. And the rest of the Parable informs us of the Confusion and Fate of the Foolish; they find themselves destirute of Grace, they bewail themselves, they seek it in vain at last, and in a most wretched manner; therefore they cannot dare to meet the Bridegroom, nor can he admitted to the Marriage, when too late they plead for it with Tears and Anguish: The Meaning of which is, That if Death find us in a graceless State, there is no Help or Relief. but we are excluded for ever from God and Christ. The Practical Improvement of all is, Watch therefore, for ye know neither, &c. o sbuff Alecch 13. 12, 14

These are all copious Practical Topicks, which, however meanly treated, must needs be powerful and profitable to a serious Reader. I will take them in the Order wherein I find 'em, and imploring the Presence and Help of Christ, the glorious Subject of all the following Discourses, begin with the First Verse.

Ver. 1. Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins; which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

By the Kingdom of Heaven here is meant the Visible Church, and Kingdom of Christ in this World. It cannot possibly be understood of the Kingdom of Glory, because there are no Foolish Virgins there: Nor yet can it be meant of the Invisible Kingdom of Grace, for they are all Wise that are in that also. But in the Visible Church of Christ there ever has been, and will be, a Mixture of Good and Bad, a few Upright among many Hypocrites and Wicked Persons. For which reason our Lord abounds in like Similitudes, wherein he resembles our State under the Gospel to Wheat and Tares in one Field, Sheep and Goats in one Common, and a Net cast into the Sea, gathering of every kind.

In short, the Bridegroom is Christ, the Virgins are Professors, and their taking their Lamps, and going forth to meet him, is the Declaration and Show they make of this their Profession: And accordingly we have these Three Truths intimated to us. 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. 2. That the Professors of the Gospel shou'd resemble Virgins espoused to him. 3. That it is our indispensable

B 3

Duty to make an open Profession of Faith in him: Which took their Lamps, and went forth &c.

t. It is obvious to observe, how our Holy Redeemer wouchsafes to speak of Himself as the Bridegroom of his Church. So tender is the Affection he bears, and would express to those whom he has redeem'd with his own Blood, that he delights in such a Style. Therefore in another Parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is said to be like unto a King that made a Marriage for his Son. The very frequent Allusions to the Marriage-State is enough to sanctify it; and indeed therefore is it alluded to, because it is pure and ho-

nourable in it felf.

Throughout the Divine Song of Solomon, the Communion between Christ and his Church, is most plainly spoken of under this Allusion; and, indeed, among all the elegant Metaphors wherein the Scripture Ipeaks of the Union of Believers to Christ, none is more intimate and endearing than this of his espousing them; none give us a like Idea of Love and Joy. * Thy Maker is thy Husband, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Ifrael. But the Espousals of a Bride are oftnest alluded to. He that bath the Bride is the Bridegroom; and again, Can the Children of the Bride-chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? We read also of the (a) Bride the Lamb's Wife. Our Union to Christ is but begun in this Life; in Heaven, which is his Bosom, it will be consummated: Our Love to him now should be for Degree as the Love of our Espousals; when Death brings us to see his Face in Glory it will be perfected.

It were easy to run the Comparison in many Particulars, and, indeed, to exceed in doing so.

^{16. 54. 5. †} Jo. 3. 29. | Marth, 9. 15. (a) Rev. 21. 9.

As. 1. Has not the Heavenly Bridegroom given us the utmost Proof of his unfeigned and infinite Love to us, bis Delights from everlasting in the Sons of Men, and Defires of our Happiness? Even so far as to leave his Throne of Glory, and come down to visit us, and here to suffer and die for us! Can there be any Love beyond this? Strong as Death, and which no Floods could quench! What a vebement Flame! How passing Knowledge! Can you take the Height, or plumb the Depth, or measure the Length and Breadth? It is one great End of the written and preached Gospel, to set before us this Love of our Saviour in a due Light, to cause us to * comprehend it with all Saints. A Love beyond what Angels and Seraphins do know! for no Created Being ever can repay to God an equal Love. Now the Declaration of this ineffable Love, is a fair Advance, on the Redeemer's Part, toward the uniting us to Himfelf: There can remain no Doubt or Scruz ple of his real Inclination, or of his ardent Defire to gather us under his healing Wings, and receive us into the Embraces of a Father, or a Husband.

2. Does not this Divine Person sue for thy Love, O Christian, and earnestly make tender of his own, of Himself, to thee? † By his Loving-kindness he would draw thee. He suspends his Love only on this, If a Man love me—Then my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He asks our Hearts, that we love him with all our Soul, and Mind, and Strength; and pursues us Year after Year with this Demand. As the Friends and Servants of the Heavenly Bridegroom, We pray you in Christ's

^{*} Eph. 3. 18, 19. + Jer. 31. 3.

flead; as tho' He himself did beseech you by us, to accept of his Love, to yield your felves unto him who has first loved you, and given himself for you, and by that glorious Price bas bought We beg of you not to fend us back with a peremptory Denial, nor to put us off with paltry Excuses, in effect, to tell us, That other Lovers and Idols have taken Possession of your Hearts. I am fure, a very honourable and importunate Suit has been made unto you in the Name of the Son of God, and He himfelf fays, * Behold, I fand at the door and knock, --- + Open to me my Sister, my Love, my Undefiled .- The Daily Tender of the Saviour to thee, is, Sinner, I am willing to be thine in all the Offices and Benefits of a Saviour, take me to be thy Portion, place and feek thy Reft in me, be but content in me, and in my Love, do but fay, That in this, thou haft enough, and all, that it is all thy Salvation, and all thy Defire, and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with Thee.

This shall be an abundant Reward for all the Labours of our Ministry, if we may but gain this explicit Consent of the Soul unto the Motion made from Heaven; That when the Saviour asks of thee, 'Soul, Shall I be thine? you may with Transport reply — Lord, I am willing, I freely consent, I most thankfully accept, I infinitely desire it. || When thou saids, Seek ye my Face, my Heart said unto thee, Thy Face, Lord, will I feek.

Therefore also are you so often told, how excellent his Name is in all the Earth, as an Ointment poured forth, to command the Virgins Love; how

^{*} Rev. 3. 20. + Cant. 5. 2. | Pfal. 27. 8.

all his Garments smell of Myrrhe; how amiable he is, and altogether lovely; how much fairer than the Children of Men, Grace being poured into his Lips. God never favour'd the World with such a Vision of Glory before, the Glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, the Spirit Immeasurably given: Whenas a very small measure of Grace in the Saints, renders 'em very lovely to God and Man: How then should our Hearts be ravish'd with that Love and Beauty, which is so transcendent-

ly perfect!

Finally, To gain thy Love it is, O Christian, that the Advantage of a Union to the Lord Jesus Christ, is so often inculcated, and justly reprefented to thee: The Benefits that will hence redound to thee, the Inheritance it will entail on thee for ever. A very proper and powerful Argument to use with Creatures, who are born with an inextinguishable Thirst after Happiness. His Love shall be always toward thee; that Love which is it felf Life and Bleffedness to us! which shall effectually consult our Safety and Peace in Life and Death; which will endow us with the Treasures of Grace, and has settled Heaven on us in Sacred Promifes, inviolable as Eternal Truth. So is thy Love fought for, O Christian, and the Love of thy Saviour offer'd.

3. And what is more, have not We made shew of consenting to the Proposals of the Gospel, and visibly subjected our selves to Christ as our King and Saviour? Have we not given up our Names to him, and subscribed with our Hands to his Covenant? Do we not confess him with our Lips, and call our selves by His Most Holy Name? Are we not baptized into his Death? And do we not worship Him in Solemn Stated Manner?

ner? Do we not confirm our early Dedication to him, by owning the Lord's Covenant in the Face of his Congregation? And do we not renew our Vows and Engagements at his Table? We are Witnesses, that we have thus avouched Christ to be our Lord, formally contracting our selves to Him; and He has declar'd his visible accepting you, by the Hands of his authorized

Ministers.

So far we have feemingly succeded in our Errand, when, like the faithful Servant of Abrabam, we have told it, and put it to you to anfwer, if now you will deal kindly and truly with our Sovereign Master, and like the wise and happy Damfel you have freely accepted. To this thefe Walls are Wirness, and so is the Lord's Servant who has receiv'd your open and voluntary Engagements, and fo is the Lord's Congregation who have feen and heard it. So have we feen you accept of the Gracious Motion made to you from the Son of God, and in his Name, to whom you have given your felves away, always to live unto him, and walk with him in his Holy Infitutions; whereupon we have bow'd down our Heads, and worship'd; pray'd over and bless'd you in the Name of the Lord, to whose Grace and Keeping we have left you.

All this has been ratified by solemn Rites, ordained by Christ to that End; significant of a mutual sacred Obligation, on the Part of Christ and the devoted Person; performed by His Officer, authoris'd and requir'd to receive our credible Profession of Repentance, Faith and Obedience, and in his Name to receive us into his Flock, and seal to us our Partaking in the promised Blessings of the Covenant of Grace, if we are faithful to do the Duties of it. Which leads me to add.

4. That the Relation wherein Christ proposes and offers himself unto us, agrees in many refpects * to the Conjugal or Marriage Relati-

on. As, First, It is the Nearest, most Intimate and Indissoluble. As Marriage makes Two to become One, so he that is joined to the Lord is one Spi-

rit (a). There is a spiritual Union by Faith and Love (b). The Marriage Covenant gives way to this, and binds not when it comes into Competition. We must forlake and hate every Relative for the sake of Christ. Because there is no higher Allusion known among Men, whereby to express the Union of Believers to Christ, therefore has the Holy Ghoft used this; (c) We are Members of bis Body, of bis Flesh, and of bis Bones. The Reference is to those Words of Transport wherewith Adam receiv'd and welcom'd Eve: charm'd at her fight he faid, This is now Bone of my Bone, &c. And as the Marriage Covenant binds till Death, so is our Union to Christ for Life, for ever: Death do's but perfect it. This God is our God for ever and ever.

Secondly, Our Relation to Christ is by a most facred and awful Covenant: as of Marriage we read, she is thy Companion and the Wife of thy Covenant. There is a free Contract: the Choice is mutual, and so is the Obligation. It is between two only, Christ and the Soul; wherein our Faith is plighted, Fidelity engaged, in exclusion of all

others.

Thirdly, The Duties of this Covenant are like those which a Wife engages in her Marriage: for instance, Intire, unseigned, servent, and per-

^{*} Of these see Bragg on the Parables, Vol. I. p. (a) I Cor. 6. 17. (b) John 17. (c) Eph. 5. 30.

petual Love to Christ. Hence the Church speaks of him in this Style, Him whom my Soul loveth. Again, Subjection and Obedience are the willing Offering of Love. * As the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the Wife, &c. This is in acknowledgment of the Excellency, Preheminence, Authority of Christ, For the Husband is the Head of the Wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church

and the Saviour of the Body.

Fidelity, Purity, and Honour are employ'd and evidenc'd in Obedience. All Sin and Disobedience is resented as a defiling our selves with strange and impure Loves. Honour and Worship is due, as the Wife shou'd see that she reverence her Husband. Constancy in Love and Obedience to the death, is the Grand Engagement of the Covenant; even as the Wife is bound by the Law as long as her Husband liveth. All Sin is Treachery and Disloyalty against the Saviour. We are to be perpetual Captives to his Love: Be thou faithful to the death!

Lastly, The Privileges of the Covenant in Christ do agree with those to which a Wise is entitled by Marriage. As, there is a special Propriety in Christ and in all his Benefits: My beloved is mine and I am his. A Title to his Love, I am my beloveds, and his desire is towards me. As it is natural and invincible to love our own Bodies; for no Man ever yet hated his own Flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church.

The Fruits of this tender Affection are, Provision, Protection, and Conduct from Christ. Is the Husband to provide for the Wife? For if any Man provide not for his own, especially those of his own House, he has denied the Faith, &c. So are

Eph. 5. 24. † Ver. 23.

our Wants supply'd by Christ, who cares for us; My God shall supply all your Wants according to his Riches in Glory by Jesus Christ. Is the Husband to protect and defend the Wise? So the Lord the Church: God having put all things under his Feet, and given him to be Head over all things to the Church. Again, Ought the Husband to counsel and guide the Wise, which is the proper Office of the Head? So the Church is under the Watch and Instuence of the Redeemer, who is the Eternal Wisdom of God, and wonderful in Counsel.

Again, By our Covenant Relation to Christ we partake in his Honours and Inheritance; as the Wise shares in the Degree and Possessions of the Husband: For if the Head be honoured, so are the Members: the Crown is put on the Head, but it Dignistes the whole Body: Now ye are the Body of Christ and Members in particular. We are said to be Heirs with him; and he has said, The Glory which thou gavest me, I have given

shem.

Finally, The Covenant promises the everlasting enjoyment of Christ. And this leads me to

add,

when your espoused Saviour will come to issue all, and your Union to him shall be consummate? I mean, when he shall call you hence to Heaven by Death, or descend from thence himself to gather bis Elect from the four Winds. This was his parting Promise, I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to my self, that where I am ye may be also. He will not always endure your present distance, O Believer, surely I come quickly, has he said with equal Desire as your Hearts can make Answer, Even so come Lord Jesus! Then will the

Marriage of the Lamb be come, and his Members at his Right-hand ready, as a Bride adorned for her Husband; beyond the fading Comparison of Raiment of Needle-work, or Cloathing of wrought Gold.

Here it will be proper to add, That the fecond coming of Christ will be in the Quality of a Bride-groom to his espoused Saints. He will come in the Affection, Gladness, Array, Pomp, and Solemnity of a Royal Bridegroom to meet his Redeemed, and lead them to his Father's House.

In the Affection becoming this Relation will he appear. He has not chang'd that with his Condition (a). In his dying Prayer he gave them the utmost Security of the Performance, and eternal Duration of his Affection to them: the same Love that carried him to his Cross will

vet inspire him.

Hence will arise Divine Joys and Gladness. Twould be indeed Indecent to be sad and heavy (b). There is no servent Love but has many Degrees of Joy attending it. The Sun is therefore compared to a Bridegroom for its Gaiety and Brightness, and chearful Pace (c). The Saviour took a melancholy Leave of his Disciples, as he went to the Garden, and from thence to his Cross: Sorrow then filled their Hearts: but he told 'em he would see them again and their Hearts should rejoice. The Saviour's Sorrows are past with his Humiliations, nothing but Triumph is behind.

His Array is of Light and Glory. The Marriage Dress, the Bridal Robes; to express the before-named serenity and satisfaction of Mind.

⁽a) John 13. 1. 14. 20. (b) Matth. 9. 15. Cant. 3. 11. Ifa. 62. 5. Jer. 1. 34. (c) Pfalm 19. 15.

As the Sun rifes in a glorious Attire of Light, so will he break forth from his heavenly Chamber. As at his Transfiguration his Raiment was, like his shining Countenance, white as the Light. The Splendor of his glorified Body will be dazling, like the unapproachable Light (d). What Streams of Glory shall his pierced Temples, his pierced

Side, and Hands and Feet shoot forth?

And what is wanting now, save the Solemnity, and State and Pomp that agrees to this Character? He will come enthroned. Suppose on a radiant Cloud, fashion'd and blazon'd with all the Skill of Heaven into a great white Throne: as if a thousand Suns were made into one vast Globe, and on it One out-shining what he treads on, as Solemon's Chariot of State did the Dust it pass'd over: He made the Pillars thereof of Silver and the Bottom of Gold. So on a burning refulgent Cloud shall the King of Glory come: the most pompous Show the World can ever see or Heaven afford.

The Trump of God will be blown before him (e), to bid the Virgins prepare; and Myriads of Angels and Saints will wait on and minister before him. Those heavenly Hosts that sung his Birth to humble Shepherds, will then form a Circle of Glory around his Person, and more publickly proclaim him the universal King. How proud the Saints to appear at the Foot of his Throne, or thronging his Chariot-wheels with Shouts and Songs of Salvation! strowing themselves and their Crowns as a Milky Way before him, which Bands of slaming Seraphs line in goodly Order.

⁽d) John 17. 5. Phil. 3. 21. Rev. 1, 13, 14. 15, 16. (e) Ver. 6. Matth. 24. 31. 1 Theff. 4. 16. Dan 7. 9, 10.

In this State he will give his Church a Personal and Bodily Meeting, to receive and own them as his chosen and espoused Ones before all Angels, and profess his Intire and Eternal Complacency in them. Which having done, it only remains to lead them up to their Eternal Home. My beloved and bleffed Ones! (may he then fay) you must ascend with me above all Heavens, to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God! I bave a Throne there, and you shall be about it for ever. You must needs be with me to behold my Glory, and to (ee my Father's Face, before whom I must present you. who gave you to me. I will put you in possession of the fulness of Blessedness in his immediate Presence, that you may know what God has prepared for them that love bim. And when the Prince of Heaven enters the Place of Glory, we may conceive that he will actually present the Redeemed to his Father: Behold, O my Father, thy rich and precious Gift to me, the lovely Spoule whom I have ferred for ! The Purchase of my Blood, the Travel of my Soul! The Children whom thou hast given me, the Sons that I have brought to Glory! My Seed, a goodly Election, in whom thou halt be glorified for ever! For, O Holy Father, all mine are thine, and thou art glorified in them! And now I bring them to thy facred Feet, that: thou may'ft lay thy Hands on them and bless them, and that the Love wherewith thou hast loved me may be on them! That these my dear and faithful Servants and Friends and Brethren may be thine, as I (Father) am thine. And now our bleffed Lord Jesus will have fully appeared in Quality of the Bridgeroom of his Church.

Now all is consummated, his Redeemed being brought into his Mansions and Chambers. The Eternal Day breaks, never to be followed with another Night; the Shadows flee away for ever,

never to return more; while our Beloved shall entertain us upon the Mountains of Spices.

Us E. Having thus feen in what Respects the Redeemer vouchsafes to speak of himself as the Bridegroom, let me improve it in a few Pra-

tical Reflections.

And, 1. You fee the Saviour's adorable Condescension, in taking to Himself this Stile with respect to Us. For consider on the one hand His Dignity and Glory, and on the other Our Meanness and Sinfulness: And is it not aftonishing that the King of Glory should wed himself to Dust? Are Worms of the Earth a fit Match for the Heir of Heaven? How does the Lord of All Things stoop! - lower than if a Prince should leave his Palace to seek a Companion in the Cottages of Beggars, or in the High-ways and Hedges! And yet our Deformity and Defilement by Sin, lays us much lower than the Dust out of which we are formed. That ever the Holy One should place his Love on Us! make his Choice Here! Of whom is it that he fays, * Bebold thou art fair, my Love, — Thou art all fair, there is no Spot in thee? He first sanctifies and cleanses, and then takes Pleasure in his own Image, delights in the Graces which he gives. That he shou'd ever be at the Pains to make a Sinner holy, that he might bestow his Love upon him! That he should be at the Cost to cloath us with broider'd Work, and deck us with Ornaments, that we may appear worthy of being His! O truly free and sovereign Grace! in Him whom Angels already love and serve with equal Passion that Redeemed Sinners ever can!

^{*} Cant. 4. 1, 7.

and who needed not even Them to make him happy! He cou'd need no Spouse for the Comfort or Felicity of his Being, enjoying from everlasting the Fulness of the Godhead: Being so replenished, there could be no Solitude to him, that it should be said of Him, as of desolate Man, in his best Estate, * It is not good that the Man should be alone. But our Need and Misery moved him, † For ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye thro his Powerty might be rich.

This Relation affords great Comfort, and 2. Cause of Glorying, to every Holy Christian. What can better bear us up against all our Fears, and under all our Sorrows? We are fure of being tenderly cared for: As a Man cherisheth and nourisheth his own Flesh, so the Lord the Church. Can the Children of the Bride-chamber mourn? For, Spiritually speaking, Is he not ever with you? Tell me, O Believer, the Moment that you are without Him? He dwells in you, he makes his Abode with you as he promised ||: Your Union to him can't be broken: And shou'd you mourn as without Christ in the World? If Men oppress, He upholds by the Right-hand of his Righteousness: If They mock, in Him is thy Glory, and he esteems thee: Does the World for sake? he stands by thee, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, &c. Do Thine die? He lives; this better Relative dieth no more, and in him we have infinitely more than we can lofe or want. As Elkanah said to Hannah, Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy Heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten Sons? And is it not

^{*}Gen. 2. 18. † 2 Cor. 8. 9. || Jo. 14. 23. much

much rather to be said of Christ, the Consolation of Israel? In Death it self, that dark Vale and Shadow, this strikes light for us: We go to him whom we shou'd long to see: It is thy Marriage-Day, wherein Glorious Angels shall conduct thee into the Chambers of thy King. Were the Judgment come, it would be to thee but the Bridegroom's Descent, with the Glories of Heaven to light him down, to lead thee Home in Royal State, in Quality of His Espou-

Sed Bride.

How justly do the Saints glory in this? What can their raised Ambition soar at beyond it? Espoused to the Son of God! Hail, ye bigbly favoured, the Lord is with you, you are bleffed among Men. The same manner of Salutation is due to you His Seed, as to Her that bare him, whom all Generations call blessed: For if the Womb that bare him, and the Paps that gave him suck, were bleffed, much rather ye, by our Lord's own Words: So the Church efteem'd her self when she sang. * I will greatly rejoyce in the Lord, my Soul shall be joyful in my God, for be bath clothed me with the Garments of Salvation, be bath covered me with the Robe of Righteousness, as a Bridegroom decketh bimself with Ornaments, and as a Bride adorneth her self with Jewels. Ask not the Reason of all this Transport: What is thy Beloved, O Extatick Saint, that thy Joy is so full? What Ignorance as well as Insolence must this infer? With what Refentment as well as Triumph is the Answer +? In what Holy Disdain of all Finite Perfection ; and after a labour'd Description, how ineffable the Idea suggested to us!

^{* 16. 61. 10. †} Cant. 5. 10, 60.

3. A common or ordinary Affection to Christ can never suffice. The Indifference of Strangers wou'd be a Crime and Scandal here; the Want of unseigned Love deserves the Curse*. Let this Relation justify the † Claim of Precedence, separately from his Divine Glory and Perfection: He that loveth Father or Mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and be that loveth Son or Daughter, &c. Nature abhors from it, and it is a Crime to be punished by the Judge, that there should be this

Relation and not Love. Again,

4. The Offers and Precepts of the Gospel shou'd come with so much the more Force on us. What a Charm shou'd there be in the Messages brought us from Christ? It is the Voice of my Beloved, said the waking Spoule, and her Soul failed as he spake. Surely we don't consider and realize who He is that speaks to us in the Word preached, or what his Relation to us is, and that, in effect, he always says to us, Open unto me my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my Undefiled. O stupid, sleepy Heart, that feels not the constraining Power of such Words! And yet Gracious Souls too often do not; as the Spouse for a time excus'd her self, pleading the Drowsiness, which was her Crime.

fians, and what scandalous Aggravation it receives by our Profession. So the Prophet reproached Israel, * They brake my Covenant, though I was a Husband unto them, saith the Lord. Sin in a Covenant People is so much Adultery; there is nothing but Falseness, Impurity, Immodesty in it. || Surely as a Wife treacherously departed from her Husband, so have you dealt treacherously with me, O House of Israel. You abhor the Name of an Adul-

^{* 1} Ccr, 16. 22. † Matth. 10. 37: * Jer. 31. 32. || 3. 20. tress,

refs, but is it not less to be accounted so by Men, than in the Eyes of Heaven? You can't avoid this Imputation, and indulge any one Sin: It is all so foul, it is all Lust, and the Thought of it will put a modest Conscience to the Blush.

Let me offer two or three Natural Thoughts here. To tempt another to fin, is to try to corrupt one under the Vow of Chastity, and to injure Christ in the most render Instance, to dishonour him, and to provoke his Jealousy. Also to be overcome by Temprations is most shameful Weaknels. How small is the Vertue of such a Person, who can't deny a craving Lust, tho' so strong Vows of Fidelity to Christ are upon him? But then, what Impudence is it to court Sin? to hunt after Opportunities for it, and glory in it? Some are fo shameless as to boast in the Liberties they take, * The Work of an imperious, whorish Woman, in that thou buildest thine eminent Place in the head of every way. The Work of a Woman, noting a great deal of Weakness; and of a Whorish Woman, noting Injustice, Unfaithfulnefs, Impurity in it; and of an Imperious Whorifb Woman, to charge Impudence and Shamefulres on it. Mulier Impudica Libidinis. Finally, A Divorce must needs follow, Christ will not always put up and bear with the Abuses which Sinners offer him. How often was Ifrael warn'd of this by the Prophets †? Where is the Bill of your Mothers Divorcement, whom I have put away? I will judge thee as Women that break Wedlock-Plead with your Mother, blead: for she is not my Wife, neither am I her Husband : let her therefore put away her Whoredoms out of her Sight, and her Adulteries from between ber Breafts. The Infinite

Ezek. 16. 30, 31. † Isa 50: 1. Ezek. 16. 38. Hosea 2. 2. Holines

Holiness of our Espoused Saviour, makes this Severity necessary: * He loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of Water by the Word, that he might present it to himself a Glorious Church, not having Spot, or Wrinkle, or any such thing, but that

it should be boly and without blemish.

6. And lastly, Communion with Christ must needs be delightful, and should be long'd for. The Worship and Table of Christ are powerfully recommended to us. To Him shou'd be our Defire, we shou'd crave His Presence, the Enjoyment of Him in his Ordinances : Tell me, O thou whom my Soul loveth, where thou feedest and makest thy Flocks to rest at Noon: For why shou'd I be as one that turneth aside, &c. The Concern of Few in our Days. How contentedly do Men turn afide from, turn their Backs on, the Solemn Institutions of Christianity! How Few regard the Fold of Christ, follow the Footsteps of his Flock, desire the Food and Rest which is provided for them? How desolate do the Seats look, when the more special Memorial of Christ, and the sealing a-new our Engagements to Him, come on! How forfaken and abandon'd the Lord's Table! Is he the Bridegroom? and we so backward and averse to remember him, to be where He is? What Coldness and Indifference, what Difesteem and Slight, what Hatred does this imply? What Abuse to Him that feeks thee with a dying Love, and expects you will meet him with an equal Affection, if it were possible! To find you flying from his reaching Arms, whose Absence you shou'd bear with Pain, nor shou'd any thing detain you from his Ordinances at any Time,

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but it shou'd therefore be your Affliction, and give you Gries. When the Meat-offering and the Drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord, the Church is call'd upon to lament, like a Virgin girded with sackcloth for the Husband of her youth †: It is much the same whether that ceases or we don't come to eat of it; only our Sin and criminal Contempt is the more obvious in the latter Case, and calls for the more Shame and Lamentation.

II. Christians shou'd resemble Virgins espoused to Christ.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins: And indeed, what else shou'd Christians be compared unto, when Christ is called the Bridegroom? There wou'd be no Harmony in the Parable, if the Professors of his Fear and Worship had any other Name given em.

Ten Virgins: Some wou'd find a double Mystery here, one in the Name, and another in the Number. The Papists wou'd ridiculously turn the Name to the Praise of Virginity, and the Honour of their Numeries and a Monastick Life: but as our Lord wou'd have but a poor little Kingdom if it were confined to their Religious Houses and Orders, as they call 'em, so it wou'd be no less polluted there neither than it is in the wide World: the Foolish wou'd yet be found more than the Wise, and the Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit still under the name of Sanctity, and the

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[†] Joel 1. 8.

thew of Separation from the World. It is not protended by themselves, that all are Wise and Pure that come under this Vow, nor that Marriage admits not of the Wife and Undefiled too. It is plain that our Lord gives the Name to all visible Christians equally, in whatever State or Age of Life they be; for all equally fall under one or other Character, the Foolish or the Wife. This divides the whole World of Professors, and to limit the Sense within any narrower Compass, is to put a manifest Violence on the Parable. It takes in the whole Body of the visible Church, and is not to be restrained to any one Part or Branch of it only, to Christians of this or that Denomination. All that name the Name of Christ shou'd be boly; this they bind themselves unto and make pretence of ni A shi Had nolls

Again, some wou'd find a Mystery in the Number Ten, as a Number of Perfection, but I lay no stress on the superstitious Notion: it was probably the usual Number of the Brides select Companions among the fews. As to the Name Virgins, it is given to Ministers, || Wisdom bath sens forth her Maidens: but neither is there any more Mystery in this than to incimate, that especially the Dispensers of the Word shou'd keep themselves Pure, and he Exemplary for Vertue, Modesty, Sobriety, Meekness and Reserve

from the World have but a poor linblind side by

But to return to the Allusion which I have propounded to dwell on, I will enquire in the first place, Wherein Professors of Faith in Christ should resemble Kirgins?

I wou'd check the Exuberance of Sense and Fancy in so nice a Matter, remembring with

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^{||} Prov. 9. 3.

what Decency the Subject expects to be treated, and how ill I shou'd recommend Purity by trespassing on it through an unguarded Management. My Instances therefore in respect of the Propriety of the Similitude shall be the fewer.

1. The Profesfors of Religion, like modest Virgins, shou'd live reserv'd from the World. It is become a scandalous Place thro' the Wickedness which it has fo long lain in. Too free an Intimacy or Converse in it will bring a blemish on any one. This present evil World is its Style in Scripture. The Men of the World is a Denomination that carries no great Honour in it, nay, it is a Brand of Infamy *. We read of the Corruption that is in the World, and its polluting Luft! + For all that is in the World, the lust of the Flesh, and the lust of the Eyes, and the pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World. Therefore Conformity to the World, is as thrictly as deservedly forbidden : Be not conformed to this World. The love of it is vehemently inhibited. || Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World's if any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him. Separation from it is required, nay. to have our Conversation in Heaven. The appearance of Evil is to be avoided, and the occafions of Sin run from. As Virgins that won't venture into Places or Company where their Fame and Honour may be endanger'd, tho' there be not any real hazard of their Vertue and Innocence.

It is very remarkable, how often our Lord diftinguishes his Elect from the World; so as you wou'd almost think there were a local Distance and Division, and that Believers liv'd in some

Pfalm 17. 14. † 1 Jo. 2. 16. || Ver. 15.

higher Region than other Men, were not form'd out of, nor did tread on, nor were to be resolved into the same Dust. * They are not of the World, even as I am not of the World. Thou hast given me them out of the World. You see how little they have to do with the World, what Pilgrims and Swangers they shou'd be in it, how referv'd their Converse shou'd be, how shy of its Pollutions. So modest Virgins venture abroad very little and rarely, dare not be over-free lest they get a Blot. † Pure Religion and undefiled— is this— to keep our selves unspotted from the World. I The World knoweth us not.

2. We shou'd resemble espoused Virgins in the real Esteem and Love of our Souls to Christ. At least Religious Love is decently free and open in declaring its regards to its glorious Object. It cannot blush or seign Indisference. Reserve or Slyness here is far from being a Vertue. To glory in knowing him the Lord, and to boast it the great honour of our Life if we truly love him, is beautiful in a Christian. He is thy Lord, and wor-

Chip thou bim.

Therefore in the Divine Song the Church knows no Laws of Restraint in this Matter, but publishes her own Passion toward her Beloved, of whom she says that in her Eyes he is altogether lively, and his Presence and Graces are the infinite Bliss she craves: Because of the savour of thy good Ointments therefore do the Virgins love thee, — draw me, we will run after thee,— we will be glad and rejoyce in thee. So a holy, overslowing Heart will utter it self in Prayer, out of its abundance. As the Bright Mother of all Living in her Innocence was nor assamed, for all she saw and all

Jo. 17. + Jam. 1. 27. | 1 John 3. 1.

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she thought and felt was Vertuous; so neither can the Soul whom Grace restores blush to own

the Emotions of heavenly Love it feels.

Our first and last Love, our best and strongest, most ardent and constant, our whole Love must be to Christ and him only. This is worthy to be called our Virgin Love. Our first Love is feldom where it is due. The World and its Lufts bewitch us in our early Days, and possess themfelves of our Hearts. When Christ recovers his Right it is by a forcible Ejection of a Legion of Rivals that have first got Entrance. Yet the Claim of Christ is to the first and choicest of our Years; and while your Children are on your Knees you shou'd be trying, to engage their tender Souls to love the Lord that bought 'em. As the first thing to be done for us when we come into the World is to dedicate us to Chrift. and to bring us under the Bond of his Covevant; so the first thing we have to do when we grow up is to give our Hearts to him, whose we are.

And our last Love is Christ's due. A faithful, abiding Love to death and after. It is an Immortal Principle, like the Fire on the Altar never to go out. Until the Day break, (when Death shall be over, and the Eternal Light shall shine upon me) turn my Beloved and be as a Roe, &c.— swistly and frequently visit my Soul, which shall continually long and wait to receive thee, while my

Life shall last.

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Moreover, like the Love of the Espoused, ours must be to Christ only. That admits not of many to part and divide it self among: where it has pitched and made its Choice, there it fixes intirely, and has no other before him. Thus it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him on-

ly shalt thou serve. And our Lord has given us a plain Reason for it, because a divided Love is a Contradiction, * No Man can serve two Masters,

but be will hate the one, &c.

Therefore God requires our whole Heart and Soul, which is the First and Great Commandment †. A Love every way perfect and superlative. Most excellent for kind and degree both. So we generally suppose that our Virgin Loves are the most perfect, intense, enduring, and like to prove a vehement, increasing, inextinguishable Flame.

3. Like espoused Virgins we shou'd be expecting, desiring, waiting and preparing for the Coming of our Lord. And that whether in the Visits he makes to the Souls of Saints in this Life, or his calling them to himself by Death. We shou'd look for him, and give him Welcome when we meet him, in his used Ways, his House and Ordinances, our Closers and Retirements, in both which we may have seen his Glory, and selt his Power, and tasted his Goodness. Of God, thou art my God, early will I feek thee: my Sould thirsteth for thee; my Flesh longeth for thee,— to see thy Power and thy Glory so as I have seen thee—.

How much more shou'd we with Raptures think of and wish for Heaven, the Place and Time of sall Communion and Vision? In this we grean earnestly, scil. in the hope and expectance of the appointed Hour for our going to Christ. You know the Impatiences of an expecting Love, the Preparations against the Day of the Consummation of our Desires, and how joyfully it is welcom'd when arriv'd: nor is there any

Matol. 6. 1240 + 22. 371 | Plalm 63, 1, 2.

Indecency herein. Can the Bride forget to provide her Ornaments and Attire against the Time? No more the Believer his, the Graces of the Spirit of God, and the Righteousness which is through the Faith of Christ. Death is to the Believer the Servant and Messenger of Christ, attended by a Guard of Bright and Holy Angels, to wait on and conduct him to his Rest: Why shou'd we not run to meet the smiling Vision, as those that are found alive at Christ's second Coming will

fly up to meet him in the Air.

4. We shou'd resemble Virgins in Purity. This is eminently that which the Comparison in the Text is brought for. And so the Apostle expresly uses it in his Epistle to the Corinthians, † I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaft Virgin to Christ. The Metaphor feems far too Glorious for us in this finful Flesh: A chast Virgin: For, we come polluted into the World, from the Moment of our Conception we are Unclean: We have also in our Life actually defiled our felves with Adulterous Loves: In how poor a Sense then shall we answer the Names of Innocence, Purity, Uncorrupt, Inviolate Chastity? Or, shall we defile our selves no more from this Day forward? What Man can promise this either? Or fay- I am clean from my Sin? O imperfect Purity of the best of Saints! O poor Chaftity of the wifest Virgins! Yet the Holiness, Repentance, Faith of Saints is their Purity: the Soul's Recovery and Separation from Moral Pollution.

The Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit must be supposed, and the cleansing of both, and this in order to the perfecting Holiness ||. If the Na-

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ture of God is Pure, Sin must needs pollute and make us Impure. It is the unclean thing, because fo contrary to the Holiness of God. There must be a cleansing therefore from Sin, wherefore the Scripture speaks of our being washed, purged, &c. By Imputation the Blood of Christ cleanleth from all Sin: In which sense Cleansing sounds the same with Pardon, He is faithful and just to forgive us our fins and to cleanse, &c. So the legal Sprinklings of old were Purifications for Sin, being Typical of the Blood of Christ, * Who by bimself purged our Sins; therefore under the Law almost all things were purged with Blood. The Holy Spirit cleanses the Heart by sanctifying it. A new Nature is given |, the Person is made Holy, the Soul's Rectitude is restored, Carnality is mortified, there is a delight in the Law of God after the inward Man. The Mind is irradiated by the Spirit of God to discern, the Affections purified to entertain and receive, Divine Truth. The impure Thoughts which the corrupt Mind once lik'd are now banish'd, the wanton Imaginations it once furfeited on find no more Place or License. They may break in, but their Intrusion does offend. There is an Antipathy to them I hate vain Thoughts. They pollute as well as hinder the Soul in Holy Exercises; like Swarms of Flies gathering about the Sacrifice, that distract the Offerer, and leave their Ordure on the Altar. The Soul thinks of Sin only to affect it felf with a Sorrow for it. to raise Indignation higher, and strengthen the Hatred of it. It delights in God unipeakably, and in every Thing that bears His Likenefs or Relation to His Service. Especially in the

^{*} Heb. 9. | Ezek. 36. 25.

Word, which is very pure, therefore he loves it t. Sin once had the Empire and Sway in all the Soul's Defires, Fears, Sorrows, Joys; but now the Honour, Favour and Will of God govern all its Motions. Sincerity is Purity. A Heart unfeignedly set and bent for God, intirely and without Reserve, the Principles it goes upon being Love to him and Faith in his Word; the Aims it propounds being his Glory, the pleasing him and the enjoying his Favour: This is a pure and upright Heart, | a pure Conscience, Truth in the inward Man, Singleness, Simplicity, and Faith unfeigned. This Mind and Conscience are not defiled: that faithfully follows the Word, and the Will that: and so Sin is repressed in its first Motions, neither is the Recollection of what is past pleasing, nor the Prospect or Imagination of compassing and indulging more in Time to come, but the Provocation to either detested. So pure is the New Nature; which is the Top of Chastity, not to allow a lufting Thought or Look *. It expresses it self eminently in deep Repentance for past Sin, and careful watching against all appearance of Evil for the future: the Apprehension whereof excites both Fear and Loathing. So the Woman that had been a Sinner, reclaim'd by Grace, lay at the Feet of Christ washing them with Tears, and wiping 'em with the Hair of her Head. True Contrition is absolutely neceffary to Internal Purity. Not as if the Tears of our Repentance can in themselves wash off the Stains and Defilement of past Sin, but it is the Evidence of a Soul cleanfed and changed and renewed by the Spirit of God, and that it is now pure, hating the Garment (potted with the Flesh.

[†] Pfal. 119. 140. | 2 Tim. 1.3. Pfal. 51. 6. * Mat. 5. 28. More

More particularly, the Purity of Christians must be in Faith, in Worship, and in Conver-

1. Faith purifies + and is our Purity. It is our Application to the Blood of Sprinkling, to the Fountain opened to the House of David for Sin and for Uncleanness, to the Immaculate Lamb for his Spirit and Righteousness. The Soul that is ignorant of the Doctrines of Christ, or that rejects 'em, is full of Darkness, Carnality and Error. 'Tis a corrupt Heart that receives not the faving Truths, nor embraces the precious Promiles of the Gospel. The Philosophy of the World is corrupting, as it opposes the Revelation of God: Beware lest any Man spoil you through Philosophy and vain Deceit -. Heresies pollute the Souls of Men: it is a wantonness against Christ to cast off the first Faith ||. We put away the Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, we blow out the Candle of the Lord, and the Light that is in us is Darkness. The impure Steams of the Flesh both cloud and soil the Mind. The Will is as horribly deprav'd as the Mind is darkened; in the one respect a Beast, in the other a Devil. The Psalmist notes the Rise of Infidelity, or the Reason of it to be the Soul's Depravedness, and also the Influence of it to defile it more: * The Fool bath said in his heart there is no God - it follows- they are corrupt, they are altogether become filthy. The + Apostle also often joins these two, the defiled and unbelieving, Men of corrupt Minds and destitute of the Truth, and reprobate concerning the Faith. So then, the Truth cleanses as well as enlightens, as the Light which Irradiates must

[†] Acts 15. 9. | 1 Tim. 5. 11, 124 * Pfal. 14. 1, 3. † Titus 1. 15. 2 Tim. 3. 8.

needs be pure and clean. But an Infidel Mind is a foul one, as the Place of Darkness is also

of Impurity.

2. The Chastity of Professors consists in Purity of Worship. The Holy Ghost has often branded false Worship, or any Deviation from the Institutions of God, or Mixture of our Inventions with the scandalous Names of Harlotry, Whoredom and Adultery. The Prophets always fo cenfur'd the Idolatries of Israel ||: Thou hast defiled thy self with Idols: — Upon every high Hill, and under every green Tree, thou wandredst playing the Harlot: and now tho' thou wash thee with Nitre, and take thee much Soap, yet thine Iniquity is marked before me, Saith the Lord God: How canst thou say I am not polluted, &c? And again, Through the lightness of ber Whoredom she defiled the Land, and committed Adultery with Stones and with Stocks. So lewd and unfaithful a thing is Image-worship, for which Cause also is the Apostate Idolatrous Church of Rome shown as a Whore *, the Mother of Harlots.

Nay, the Mixture of Human Inventions in the Worship of God, is a departing from the Purity of it. There was not the least thing about the Tabernacle of old, but God expressly directed it: We must neither add nor omit. There were many superstitious Usages crept in among the Jews in our Saviour's Time, of which he said, In vain do ye worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. There were Judaizing Christians in the Apostles Days, and St. Paul tells the Corinthians †, how Jealous he was over them, whom he desired to present as a chast Virgin

[|] Ezek. 22. 4. Jer. 2. 20, 22, 23. 3. 9. Rev. 17.

to Christ, but I fear (adds he) lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve thro bis Subtilty, fo your Minds (hou d be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ. Long fince did the Pfalmist fing, That the Churches Beauty, in Gospel Times, would lie in this, the preferving of her Saviour's Worthip uncorrupt, and how greatly then the King would desire it t. The Few in Sardis found it fo. and honourable Mention is made of 'em for not having defiled their Garments: Which may be understood of Spirituality of Worship, as well as of Uprightness of Life. But to make up for the Few in Sardis, we find a Noble Number of a most Glorious Character, even an Hundred forty and four Thousand, standing with the Lamb, baving his Father's Name written on their Forebeads, redeemed from the Earth. These are they which are not defiled with Women, for they are Virgins : These are they which follow the Lamb whither foever be goeth *. You see whom Heaven will another Day count worthy of the Name of Virgins, whose Fidelity to Christ and his Ordinances is inviolable, having all corrupt Worship in Detestation: Which is one eminent Character of Virgin Purity in a Christian.

3. And lastly, The Conversation of Christians shou'd be pure and chast, as becomes Virgins: And that both in Speech and Behaviour. For a filthy Heart, like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, casts up its Mire and Dirt, both

in filthy Words and Deeds.

in a Maid to have a lawless Tongue. That little Member is a World of Iniquity, and defiles the whole Body, and whole Companies. Evil

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[.]T1 . + Pfal. 45. 16, 17. . . Rev. 14. 1, 4.

Communications corrupt good Manners. The way to be perfect, is not to offend in Word. The Words of the Pure are pleasant. These Aphorisms kept in Mind, would be a Guard over the Tongue, the Government of which is so grand an Article and Attainment in Christianity. | Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers. A Christian's Talk shou'd be grave, gracious, instructive. Too often it is otherwise, light, vicious, and infectious. As the nauseous Fumes of a foul Stomach belch up at the Mouth, fo do the defiling Thoughts and Defires of the Heart issue out. and corrupt the Air we breath in, which we take in pure, and cast out again poisnous.

I will run over a few Instances, to shew how ill they agree to the Name of Virgins. There is properly unchast, lascivious, and leud Talk, which is the greatest Affront and Indignity to the Name that can be. Yet how many Christians, in Name, have such foul Mouths, and stinking Breaths, rolling the most putid Things under their Tongues, as the Morsels that are most luscious to their Palate. The Tongue is most vilely employ'd, when obscenely. The very Off-scouring of Sodom, Nusance and Plague of

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Nor does prophane Speech better suit a Vingin's Mouth. It is very impudent to set it against the Heavens. As base and villanous as God is Great and Good. If God is Gloriously, Instinitely Holy, it is the last degree of Impurity to use his Name contemptuously; blaspheming the Excellency of his Nature, as well as hecto-

ring him out of his Dominion! Prophane Swearing is a Sin at equal Defiance to God's Being,
and Man's own Reason. Blasphemy is the very
Breath of Hell; the Stench of the Pit, and
smells rank of Brimstone: Nothing more nauseous, as well as impious and destructive. It is
a wonder how such Men can endure their own
Breath, or how the Heavens bear it to be blown

against them.

Nor do fretful, impatient, quærulous Words at all become this Character and Relation of Virgins espoused to Christ. The Name calls for Silence, and the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, and the Relation commands Reverence and Refignedness. A rebellious Heart, and a murmuring Tongue, are two filthy Things in a Creature. Fonab was an amazing Proof of the inconceivable Wickedness that is in the Nature of Man. How corrupt was that Heart which was Three Days in the Depths of the Sea, and no more washed from its Filthiness! That could fo foon, and fo easily, and fo furiously, free against that God to whom he so lately and earneftly cry'd for Mercy, and had receiv'd it. The Sea never cast up so much Mire and Dirt at once, as when it threw him up alive, with fuch Remains of a corrupt Nature in him. O what a Load of Filth do we vomit out in Affliction fometimes! I mean a stubborn, kicking, faucy, muttering Heart does. So that Good People have feen reason to repreach themselves: I never thought thee fo vile neither, O finful Heart! nor that ye had this Strength, O my & Corruptions! to Iwell and rife thus high, and fruggle fo against the Restraints of the Fear of God, and the sharp Sense of his Power and Anger! Was ever any Creature of God for · licenlicentious, masterless, and hard to be broken!

But to return,

Proud boafting Speech agrees not to the Modesty of a Virgin; whether to vaunt of one's felf, or speak contemptuously of others: The one is very mean; the other plainly dirty. What a filthy Object was Nebuchadnezzar in his dishevel'd Hair, and his Talon-Nails, and his Body mired by wallowing in the Dirt? So foul was his Heart before, the Pride of which he had no sooner spew'd out, but the Beast appear'd. Yet fouler is the Mouth that spits at Goodness, and (not to let pass St. Jude's Reprehension) the filthy Dreamer that despises Dominion, and speaks evil of Dignities. O what a Flood of Scorn, Contempt, Disdain, does a base Mouth pour out against Others, and most of all against his Betters. David was the Proverb and Song of the Drunkards, but the fickly Sots drivel'd on themfelves all this while; and he that fpat in the Face of Jesus, only distain'd himself with his own Venom.

Nor should a Virgin be given to lie, and speak falsely. Falshood is Filth, as Truth is Purity: Therefore the Unclean Spirit is the Father of Lies, as God is the God of Truth. That which defileth, and maketh a Lie, are put together. Its Original is of Hell, and it flinks in the No. ftrils of all Mankind. The Devil was a Liar from the Beginning. He lied to our First Parents, and beguiled them; he lied to our Saviour when he tempted him; he was the Lying Spirit, glad of a Permission to deceive Abab; and he bely'd good fob, even to his God: He accuses the Brethren to the World, to themselves, and to their Judge. So that, as one fays, A Liar is an Incubus. So infamous and scandalous a thing, that D 2

that those in the World who make no Pretence of Religion, think their Honour wounded, and will draw, if you give em the Lie. It were well if we had the Conscience never to deserve it, as well as the Tenderness to resent it; and that Men who think this so insufferable a Scandal, wou'd honour the Gospel so far as to believe as much of other impure Lusts, which it equally

condemns, and particularly Revenge.

I might speak of mad, passionate, and furious speech, of malicious and revengeful Words, and of Flattery, the Compound of Fasseness, Malice, and Scorn all together; and show of each how indecent they are in Virgins, and how inconsistent with Purity. Passion is Poison in the Breast it swells, it soams over in a deadly Froth. Malice divests Men of Humanity. Flattery degrades our Nature, and renders it sordid and abject beyond all Comparison. These Abuses of Speech are scandalous in a Christian, as a lawless

Tongue in a Virgin.

2. Our Actions and Behaviour must be chast and pure alfo. Bleffed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord: They also do no Iniquity, they walk in his ways. The groffer Acts of Senfuality we must especially keep wide of wherein Nature confesses Turpitude, without the Charge of the Revealed Word. To practice these is to be a Beast by Choice, a sunk Slave to Corruption. One Vice wallows in its Vomit, another muddles in the Dirt; a Swine the one, a Worm the other. But the Christian must lead a Spiritual and Heavenly Life, in Obedience to the Law of Christ, and after his holy spotless Example. He must have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but reprove them. He is to walk even as Christ was to him to the to the

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Christ walked, who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth, who bare our Sing in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, should live unto Righteousness. He must purify his Soul in obeying the Truth, ' thro' the Spirit; he is to walk as becomes the Children of Light, in all Goodness, Righte-ousness, and Truth, proving what is acceptable to the Lord. He is to deny Ungodhiness and Worldly Lufts, and to live foberly, righteoutly and godly in this evil World. He must keep a Conscience void of Offence toward God and Man, be blameless and harmless, without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse World, shining as a Light therein. And having escaped the Pollutions that ' are in the World, he must not be again inf tangled, but must continue in well-doing, and follow on after Perfection, afpiring after the highest Attainments in Grace, the highest Measures of Holines: He must forget the Things that are behind, and reach forth unto those Things that are before; if by any means, to attain even to the Refurrection of the Dead. And in all this his Life is the true Picture of his Soul, as a chaft Person acts chaftly.

This is a rude hafty Draught of the Life of a Saint, which I might as eafily have enlarged in a Hundred other bright Rules and Characters, as they lie scatter'd in the Bible. What a Divine Life, what Angelical Purity is prescrib'd here? Truly, the Law is Holy, and the Commandment is Holy, and this Conversation is in Heaven, tho' few on Earth do in any good measure come up to it.

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Leh 3. 3. 9. 36.

The reason why Purity is so strictly requir'd to this height, and to the utmost Possibility, is, because Christ the Lord is infinitely Holy, whose we profess our selves to be, to whom we are betrothed. * Be ye boly, for I am boly. Let bim that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from all Iniquity. He that bath this Hope purifieth himself as be is pure. You see both the Precept and the Reason of it, and nothing is more plainly written, nor oftner repeated in the Gospel, than such like Demands and challenges of Holiness. Our Sanctification is the declared End of his Manifestation in our Flesh, and of his Death. + Te know that he was manifested to take away Sin, and in him was no Sin. And for this he died, Through Death to present you boly, and unblamable, and unreprovable in his Sight. In a Word, How should our Lord delight in us, or we in him, without the Spirit of Holiness in us, according to which he was declared to be the Son of God? His Glory being beheld as of the Onlybegotten of the Father, full of Grace. Therefore under the Law the High-Priest, because he was a more eminent Type of Christ and his Sanctity; was obliged not to marry but to a Virgin |; to fignify that such the Church is, such every Soul is, whom Christ espouses, who is the Great High-Priest of our Profession. * Wherefore, boly Brethren, Partakers of the Heavenly Calling, consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession, Christ Fesus: For such an High-Priest became us, who is holy, barmless, undefiled, Separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens: And baving such an High-Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled

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¹ Pet. 1. 15, 16. 1 Jo. 3. 3. † Ver. 5. Col. 1. 22, || Lev. 21. 13. *Heb. 3. 1. 7. 26. 10. 27.

from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies washed with pure Water.

Use. To conclude, You see how Foul you are in the Eyes of Heaven without the Spirit of Holiness. You may wash and dress, paint and patch, and outwardly admire your selves as you will; but there is a Scurf and Scabbiness within. You are to God's pure Eyes as those beastly Salvages wou'd be to yours, who dress themselves with the Entrails of Beasts with all the Filth in them: So you twine your Lusts about your Breasts, and hang'em as Bracelets on your Neck and Arms. We read in the Gospel || of a certain Man in a Synagogue that had a Spirit of an unclean Devil: Which spiritualiz'd is the Case of all vicious Christians.

How do wicked Professors blacken and dishonour themselves? How ill do's Licentiousness and Boldness in Sin become the Christian Name! Is this your Virgin Bashfulness and Reserve? Will your Holy Lord look upon you another Day, think you? Do you not incur his Contempt and the Scorn of Angels and Saints? Or, do you not create 'em Shame and Sorrow? A Pain which the Apostle shrunk from, * Lest when I come again my God will bumble me among you, and that I hall bewail many that have finned, and have not repented of their Uncleanness. For, who can without Anger and Shame see Men blaspheme and cause to be blasphemed the Holy Name by which they are called? Or, do not impure Christians apprehend any Danger to themselves? Do they forget her Punishment under the Law who

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[|] Luke 4. 33. 2 Cor. 12. 21.

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was found polluted, when she should have been an untouch'd Maid? Says the Law, † Then shall they bring out the Damsel to the Door of her Father's House, and the Men of her City shall stone her with Stones that she die, because she hath wrought folly in Israel. And has not our Lord told us that he will shew equal Jealousie and Resentment ||

But on the contrary, how Infinite is his Delight in the unstained Soul? With what Complacency will he behold his Members when he shall have cleanled them from Sin! When he shall present them Faultless before the coming of his Glory. Those Words of Inestable Contentment will again come from him ", My Dove, my Undefiled is but One: She is the only One of her Mother, she is the choice One of her that have her: the Daughters saw her and blessed her; yea the Queens and the Concubines and they praised her. Mean while let us have the most exalted Thoughts of his Holiness, and be very Penitent that we are no more like it: Let our Filthiness be our unspeakable Burthen, and let us go to the Lord Jesus for his Blood to be sprinkled on us and his Spirit to renew us: Let us cry to him as the † Leper of old worshipping him, - Lord if thou wilt thou canst make me clean: And Jesus put forth his Hand and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean : and immediately his Leprosie was cleansed.

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III. That an open, visible Profession of the Faith of Christ, is the Indispensable Duty of all Men.

OO in the Text it is common to all the Ten Vir-D gins, one as well as other, the foolish as well as the Wife, that they took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. What can this mean, but an external Profession of a religious Respect unto the Person and Name of Christ? For, by their Lamps must be understood at least, a Show and Blaze of Religion. 'Indeed, the Souls of Christians shou'd burn with bright and holy Fires of Devotion, and their Lives shou'd shine with Conspicuous Love and Zeal for the Laws and Worship of God; hereby they shou'd become fo many Lights in this dark benighted World. As when the Holy Spirit descended on the first Christians, it was in the likeness of Fire, to fignifie both the Light and Heat he wou'd impart and shed abroad in the Souls of the Elect, whom he enlightens and fanctifies. Therefore is a Lamp a meet Emblem of a Christian's Profession, who makes pretence to more Light and Knowledge than others, and to more Life. Heat, and zealous Affection to all Divine and Saving Truth.

They took their Lamps - Scil. in their Hands, and after a manner lighted too, so that it may be those that look'd on cou'd fee no difference between one and the other: their Profession was the same, and one made as good a Show or Appearance as the other. They took their Lamps and went forth ... They let the World fee, Add at he nih

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and declared openly, whom they were looking to and going out to meet. They did not difguife and hide their Thoughts, and keep their Respects covert and under the Veil of the Night, as Nicodemus and others that were Jesus his Disciples but secretly for fear of the Fews. What Light they had shined before Men, they set their Faces right, and gave some outward Testimony of a Respect for Christ. It is not enough to be convinced and perfuaded in our Hearts of the Verity of the Doctrines, and the Beauty of the Laws of Christ, no nor to be really devout in secret; but we must say this with our Mouth, and shew it in our Life to all the World. They went forth to meet the Bridegroom-. This fignifies an open and visible Respect shown to Christ. So the Phrase is used to fignifie, and so the Action is known to do in the World. To go out to meet one coming to us is, and always has been, accounted an Expression of bigh Respect, and the doing Honour to him. So courteous Lot role from the Gate of Sodom to meet the two Angels, bowing himself with his Face to the Ground. So also fofeph having notice of his Father's arrival at the Borders of Egypt, be made ready bis Charlot, and went up to meet him unto Goshen. A meet Testimony of the filial Honour and Reverence his Soul bare to his aged Venerable Father. Which Veneration of his Soul he let the Egyptians fee, as we should let the World see ours to Christ.

This then is plainly the Scope of the Phrase,—
That an open visible Profession of Christianity is the Indispensable Duty of all to whom the Gospel comes.
To the clearing of which Assertion it will be necessary to enquire, 1. What that Profession is which the Gospel demands of us? 2. Why it is of such Importance and Necessity?

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1. What is that Regular, Visible Profession

which the Gospel requires?

I answer, It is an open, credible owning of the Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of the World, as he has made himself known to us in his Word, and in that Manner which he himself hath therein appointed. This Description of a Regular Profession of Christianity consists of these three Principal Branches. 1. It is the owning Christ, as he has made Himself, his Truth and Will, known to us in his Word. 2. It must be done in that Way and Manner which he has therein appointed. 3. It must be open to the sight of all Men and Credible.

I. It is necessary to a Regular Profession of Christianity, that the Lord Jesus Christ be owned and acknowledged by us, according as he has made Himself, his Truth, his Will, known unto us in his Word. The written Word of God is the Fountain of all Divine Knowledge. It is this which teaches us what we are to believe concerning God, and what Duties he requires of us. What God is, and who is the Only True: who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and what the Religion is which he has Instituted. But I shall not here repeat the Articles of our Creed. nor dwell on the Doctrines of his Godhead (his Eternal Generation and Sonship) his Incarnation, Conception, Birth, Life, Death, Refurrection, Ascension, &c. his Offices, Doctrines, Laws. Promises, Threatnings, &c. These do all lie plain in the Word to a diligent and ferious Enquirer, to which I refer him; for it wou'd be too wide a Compass to enter on any distinct Consideration of these sacred Subjects here.

The Scripture is the Rule of Faith, to this we are referred by him that inspir'd it; if we speak

not according to this there is no Light in us, we firay into Errors and wander in the Dark. Here we must search for the Record which God gave of his Son, to which it is not lawful to add or take away a Word. But as he has revealed himself, such must we believe him to be, and adore him

accordingly.

2. This Acknowledgment of Christ, his Truth and Will, must be made in that Way and Manner which he has appointed in his Word. Our Lord has lest us Particular Rules how he wou'd have us declare our believing in him. We must light our Lamps at his Word, or they will not give that true Light, whereby all Men shall know

that we are his Disciples.

And here particularly, First, we must worship bim according to his own Institutions. It is in vain to speak of making a Profession of the Name of Christ, and not paying him Divine Adoration: for every Knee must bow at his Name, as the Crowns of Heaven are cast at his Feet *. He has appointed how he will be worshipped in his Church on Earth, and told us that in vain do we worship him t in any other Way, and that full well do we reject his Will and Wisdom by mixing our own Inventions. I have already spoken of the Purity of Worship, which ought to be preferved Inviolate in the Church. Scrange Fire is an Abomination. Men worship they know not what ||. Any Failure or Disorder in Worship is a great blemish and stain in a Christian Profesfion. Our Savious will be the Master of his own House, and the Orderer of all Things there.

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Rev. 5. 21. † Matth. r5. g. | John 4 22.

So then where the Publick Worship of Christ is maintained in its Purity, his Day spent in it, his House frequented, those Assemblies upheld where Prayer is offered in his Name, the Doctrines and Laws of his Kingdom are preached, the Sacraments of the New Testament are administred, Evangelical Discipline is kept up, there is so far a Regular Profession of Christia-

nity made.

We must offer up Prayer and Praise in his Name. This was the Character of the Primitive Christians - * Them that call on thy Name; † all that call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord; both theirs and ours. And this he requires of us, | Ask in my Name-that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Hereby we folemnly own him to be the Only Mediator between God and Man, our Advocate with the Father, the High-Priest of our Profession, by whom we have access unto God. We renounce every other Mediator, Angel or Saint, and profess that unto us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jefus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Again, A Religious Attendance on the Word preaebed is a plain Testimony of our owning and professing the Name and Faith of Christ. Hereby we own him to be our Saviour and Judge, whose Will obliges us, by whose Laws we are bound, whose Word shou'd rule us or Will condemn us. We preach Jesus Christ *, the Doctrines and Laws of his Kingdom, the Promises and Threatnings of his Covenant; which while we give reverent

^{*} Acts 9, 14. † 1 Cor. 1. 2. | John 14. 13. * Acts 5: 42. 2 Tim. c Tit 3 to See Monden Ottervald's chi.it.rop

Attention to, we submisly own his Right to go-

vern and his Power to judge us.

Moreover, Baptism is a most special appointed Way of our owning Christ. Our solemn Dedication to him, and Admission into his Flock. We are sign'd as his Property, listed under his Banner, receive his Name and Mark in our Foreheads, become Debtors to the whole Gospel, as the fews, by Circumcision, did to the whole Law of Moses.

of our Saviour and his Death. It is an ample owning in Words and Signs the Crucify'd Jesus. We own our Lord on his Cross, as the happy Thief once did: We follow him to it as the sorrowful Women once: We call the World to witness that we are not asham'd of the Cross of

Christ: We glory in it before their Eyes.

All this is according to the Appointment of Christ, but it is not all the Acknowledgement of him he requires from us; the outward Obfervance of all this a great many come up unto, but it is a lamentable Defect when Men stop here. The Confession of the Name of Christ is, after all, very lame, and will be so, till the Discipline which Christ has ordained be restored, and the Rite of Confirmation be recovered to its first Use and Solemnity. The reason why the one is dwindled into a useless Name, is because the other is lost. There is a Discipline which our Saviour has instituted ||, which should be to his Church for ever a sacred and inviolable Order. The Honour of Religion, and the Safety of Souls calls for it. The

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Matth. 18. 15, 16, 17. 1 Cor. 5. 2, 3, 4. 2 Theff. 3. 6. 1 Tim. 5. Tit. 3. 10. See Monsseur Ostervald's Causes of the present Corruptions among Christians, Part II. Cause 2.

First and Grand Defect in Church Order, seems to me to be the Abufe, or the total Want, of a regular * Recognition of the Baptismal Vow, by those that have been baptized in their Infancy, as they grow up. If this were strictly attended, fo wou'd the Exercise of a severe Watch, in all likelihood, continue, and the Administration of inft Cenfures would follow upon Occasion: But a false Step being made here, runs us into great Confusion and Disorder. Your external Profession or Confession of the Christian Faith, is very imperfect, without a publick serious Declaration of it in the Face of the Congregation, at the Demand of your Pasters, when you come to Years of Difcretion. It is not enough that you have been baptized, and had a Christian Education, and have given your Attendance on the Publick Worship of Christ from your Infancy; but now you are to fay, That you stand to your Baptism, and take that Vow upon you, and confirm and ratify all that was done by your Parents in the folemn devoting you to God from the Womb. This is the most explicit Act of confessing Christ, that is done by a Christian ordinarily in his whole Life. And while we neglect it, we give the Adversary of Infant Baptism a great Advantage to glory against us. For, as an excellent Perfon fays in this Cafe, The Baptismal Engagement is a Personal Thing, in which every Body should act and answer for himself. When Children are baf prized, they know nothing of what is done to them, it is therefore absolutely necessary, that when they come to Years of Reason they hould become Members of the Church out of

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^{*} See Calamy of Vows, p. 85, 88.

Knowledge and Choice. This is no Novelty, Innovation, or unnecessary Solemnity (adds he) as some call every Thing which does not agree with the Custom of their Country or Church; but it is an Imitation of the Ancient and Apofolical Order, and an Establishment altogether fuited to the Nature of the Christian Religion *. This would be indeed a regular Profession, whereas the Want of some such Order makes it miserably halt, and cripples Discipline. This would very much perfect our Stated Worship of God, and, thro' Grace, qualify many the more for, and introduce 'em to, the Lord's Table, and to the Font of Baptism for their Seed. But so much for this First and Chief external Sign and Act of a Christian Profession, the Worshipping our Lord according to his own Appointment and Institution. I shall but name the rest. are nev won and a vonsh

Lips on all Occasions, by arguing for, defending, vindicating his Name and Truths. We are therefore requir'd † to be valiant for the Truth, to be ready to give to every one that asketh us a reason of our Hope, and to strive together for the Faith of the Gospel: For its Defence and Vindication, for its Maintenance and Propagation. Cowardice is a Blot on a Christian as well as Ignorance. The zealous Apostle could not stand by tamely, and see his Saviour treated rudely: He drew bis Sword as he afterward did his Pen, in his Cause. Our Regards run low, our Zeal is very cold, if his Enemies Pride and Biasphemy do not raise our Indignation, and find us a Tongue. If we

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^{*}Causes of Corruption, p. 395, 396. † Jer. 9. 3. 1 Pet. 3.

light into the Company of a prophane Despiser of God, shall we be laugh'd out of our Faith, and fneak away filently? Or if we meet a fcrupulous Person, shall we have nothing to say to farisfy and resolve his Doubts? What a Shame and Scandal to our Profession is it, as ignorantly to betray our Saviour, as another shall impiously deny him. By found Doctrine we must convince Gainsayers, whose Mouths (says the A-postle ||)) must be stopped. To confute an Atheist, is to confess God, his Being, and Perfections, and his Governing Providence. So also a Christian should be able and bold to affert his Saviour's Divinity, and plenary Satisfaction against a Socinian; and to the Teeth of a few he should confess and prove that same Jesus whom they once crucified to be Lord and Christ.

that we shou'd own him, is by owning his People, serving his Members and Interest in the World. The Cause and Church of Christ is himself: He that disserves that sights against him; he that adheres to that cleaves to him. He has told us he will put to his own Account the Love we bear to the least of his Members, how much more to his Cause in general? Especially if it be too low, despised and persecuted, it is a glorious Owning of Christ to assert it and stand by it. Then a Profession has its Reward. So had Onesiphorus's, The Lord give Mercy unto his House, says the Apostle *, for he oft refreshed

me, and was not ashamed of my Chain, &c.

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Fourthly, Our Saviour requires us to own him practically, in a holy obedient Conversation, according to his Law. And all other Testimonies

[|] Titus 1. 9, 11. * 2 Tim. 1. 16, 17.

of our acknowledging him without this, he makes no Account of. In our * Works we may more effectually deny him, than all the possible Solemn Words do own him. † Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Impiety sets up for the Devil, and makes Profession of his Service. || He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him. He that saith he abideth in him.

ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

Laftly, We must suffer and die for the Name of Christ, if he in his Holy Providence call us to it. It is a Grand Precept of the Gospel, That we take up our Cross and follow our Saviour; and if we flinch at this, our Lord tells us we are not worthy of him*. The Professor must prepare for Persecution, and must be above the Fear or Shame of Men. So the First Christians were driven from City to City, and hal'd before Governors and Kings, rejoycing that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of their Lord. This is indeed to own him, in time of Temptation not to fall away, and when Tribulation ariseth, not to be offended. Some have therefore merited the Glorious Stile of Confessors, even the Noble Army of Martyrs, who have took joyfully the spoiling of their Goods, have facrific'd their Names with Gladness, have forfaken Brethren, and Sisters, Parents, Wife, and Children, nor have counted their Lives dear. Nothing becomes a Disciple better than Peter's Zeal abstracted from his Confidence, Lord, I am ready to go with thee to Prison and to Death: I will die with thee sooner than deny thee. Thus we have feen in what Way

^{*}Tit. 1. 16. † Luke 6. 46. | 1 Jo. 2. 4, 6. "Mat. 10, 38.

and Manner it is that our Saviour expects that we should make Profession of him.

3. And lastly, I need not say now, That he requires an open and credible Profession of us. The Lamp is designed to give Light, for Men do not light a Candle and put it under a Bushel, but in a Candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in

the House.

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The Command is, To confess him before Men, in the Sight, and to the Face, of Prophane Men, that may scoff at our Profession, or Infidels that deny it, or Persecutors that forbid and threaten It is not enough (Fidem intus tenere, foris dissimulare) to be convinc'd in our Conscience, and diffemble our Thoughts; but the Rule is, † If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy Heart that God bath raised him from the dead -. Whatever Honour we have for Nicodemus, we must needs pity and condemn his cowardly Secrecy: Under the Covert of the Night he came to Jesus, and in private owns his Mission from God: But he repair'd his Fault, first by appearing for him in the Council [], and afterwards by bringing a Mixture of Myrrbe and Aloes, about an bundred Pound weight, against the Burial of the Body of Jesus. So also Joseph of Arimathea was at first a secret Disciple because of the Fews, but when Things came to Extremity, he boldly own'd the Lord, and went unto Pilate and begged the Body of Fesus. No doubt, but the Parents of the Blind Man secretly reverenc'd their Benefactor, but the Fear of the Rulers made them basely shy and silent: They saw the Joy of their Son's Soul, and no doubt, by Sympathy and the Workings of Nature, felt it too,

yet durst not utter one grateful Word in his Honour. Far from his Spirit, who said, * I will speak of thy Testimonies before Kings, and will not be

ashamed.

But an open Profession may not be credible: Such as the World ought or can give Credit to. We may contradict it by Heretical Tenets, by False Worship, or a Vicious Life. Our Words may be very good, but utterly destroy'd again by ill Opinions or Practices; the one a blind Profes-

fion, the other flur'd.

For if a Man calls himself a Christian, but questions the Godbead of Christ, does he not deny him? If he equal the Virgin-Mother, and worship his Saints together with him, does he hold the Head? And if he deny the Word and Sacrament, as the Quakers do, does he not wound his Profession, and mutilate Christianity? What if he Judaizes, shall his Christian Name profit him +? Or if a Man live after the Flesh, and to the Devil, is he Jesus's Disciple? Will Heaven own him? Will Men think him fo? No: For be is not a few who is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the Flesh: but be is a few who is one inwardly, and Circumcifion is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men but of God ||.

And thus we have heard what that Profession of the Christian Faith is, which we do make, or at least pretend to do. Such God grant us all Grace to be, in Word and Tongue, in Deed and Truth! So may our Lamps shine! So may we always have them lighted and trimm'd in our Hands! Or else our Blaze will go out in an unsavoury Snuff when Death comes; and

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Pfal. 119. 46. † Gal. 5. 2. | Rom. 2. 28, 29.

how goodly soever we look now, our Name will one Day stink in the Nostrils of the Saints.

II. It remains now to be shewn, Why a Visible Profession is so necessary and indispensable a Duty? In Answer to which it is obvious to observe, how strictly the Scripture enjoyns it, and insists upon it, and that the Nature of the Thing speaks it.

I. The Scripture insists on it, That there should be an Open Owning of the True Religion. Therefore were there given to the Jews of Old so many outward Signs of their Relation to the True God, whereby they were in the most visible manner distinguish'd from the rest of Mankind: They bare the Sign of their Saviour in their Flesh, and their Worship was diametrically opposite to that of the Nations round about them. The outward Observances of that Dispensation were to be religiously attended, even all the Offerings, Washings, and Purisications of the Law of Moses: And this was to maintain the Visible Kingdom of God among them.

And under the Gospel Christ has taken particular Care, that his Worship, and all the Rules and Ordinances of Christianity, be upheld in the World, till it trample down, or subdue all the Superstitions and Impostures that do oppose it. He has therefore lest many formidable Threatnings recorded against them that dissemble his Name, either thro' Fear or Shame.

* Whosever shall deny me before Men, him will I deny before my Father. He that shall be asham'd of me, and of my Words, in this adulterous and sinful

^{*} Mat. 10. 33. 2 Tim. 2. 12. Mark 8. 38. Gene-

Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels. Why is this Excision from Himself in all opprobrious Circumstances so threatned, but to let us know the Guilt, if we do not freely, openly, and constantly confess his Name now.

On the other hand, To encourage us to a bold, zealous, and faithful Confession of him. He has most graciously promised then to confess us before his Father and the holy Angels. He will give an Honourable Account of his True Wor-Shippers before all Heaven, prefenting them to his Father, the Holy Angels standing round, and looking on; in like Bleffed Words as those wherein he commended his Elect Disciples to his Father in his parting Prayert. These are they to whom I have manifested thy Name, thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy Word: For I have given unto them the Words which thou gaveft me, and they bave received them, and bave known surely that I came out from thee, and they bave believed that thou didft fend me. And thefe are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. O Words of aftonishing Consolation !---enough to hearten us to confess our Lord in the Face of Death, in its worst Appearance.

but the Reason and Nature of it. Hence the common Sense of Mankind led them always to it; as soon as they did but receive any Notion of a God and Worship.

False Religions have been always solemnly profess'd, and the Kingdom of Satan, in its Time, made Noise enough, witness the samous States

world. And shou'd not the True Religion of God our Saviour be as openly afferred and maintain'd? Could the Apostles conceal the Name of Christ, when they saw Men worshiping Stocks and Stones? Shall Impostors intrude and run away with all the Homage, while we are in Him that is true, even in the Son of God, and sit down contented that it should be so! Let us disdain to be excell'd by the Superstitions of blind besotted Heathenism. We do well to have our Temples too erected to Him that ought alone to be feared: To worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness, and assemble in his Courts in Crowds.

Impostors have always affected much visible Pomp and Magnificence, Stately Temples, and Gilded Shrines, at least to take the Eyes and Sense of Men. Their Worship has been always full of Oftentation and Ceremony, to make a Noise and Show. The Prayers to Baal were very noify, antick, and cruel, and ftruck the Senses of Men. So did the passing thro' the Fire to Moloch. And fo is the Worship of the Beaf. after whom the World has fo gaz'd. And fo was the Temple and Magnificence of the Goddels Diana, whom all Afia and the World once were faid to worship. And is it fit that the Only Saviour should be without an Altar, without Worshipers? Should the Name of FESUS be forgotten, whilst every brurish Idel is on Record? Have a People deny'd Solemn Worship to Their Gods, which yet are no Gods? Pass over the Isles of Chittim and fee, fend unto Kedar, and confider diligently, and see if their be such a thing. Shall the Glorious and Fearful Name of JEHOVAH, the Lov'd and Adorable Name of JESUS, be treated

treated by us with less Respect, than the Vanities of the Idolatrous World have been by them!

* For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all Gods. For all the Gods of the Nations are Idols, but the Lord made the Heavens. Honour and Majesty are before him, &c. Give unto the Lord, O ye Kindreds of the People, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

And moreover, The Kingdom of Satan is too visible yet, even where Christ has set up his Kingdom. His Rule in the Children of Dischedience is feen every where. Damnable Errors are broach'd and defended with Satanical Rage, Malignity, Confidence. The Enemies of the Cross of Christ are many, whose God is their Belly. And is it not Decent that some shou'd appear for God and oppressed Holiness? Who is on the Lord's side, who? Who will rife up for me against the evil doers, and who will stand up against the workers of Iniquity? Should we altogether hold our Peace, the Stones wou'd speak and own their Maker. It was the Name of Christ when first profess'd and call'd upon that struck the Heathen Oracles dumb; and fo they remain while the Everlasting Gospel is preached, runs and is glorified.

So then the Honour of our Saviour calls for a visible Profession: he else loses his visible Church and Kingdom, is cast out of his own Vineyard, dethroned and deny'd in all the glorious Style and Relations which he laies Claim unto. What a King wou'd here be without Subjects! A Mediator and his Name never used! A Saviour without a Church! A Head without

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Pfalm 96. 4, -10. Mel elderobA ban b'vol

a Body, without Members! A Propher and none to teach! A Law-giver and none to govern or to judge! So Ridiculous a Notion Pilate thought that Accusation of the Jews against him, that he made himself a King and a Rival to Casar, when he appear'd as a desolate, forsaken Prisoner at his Bar †.

What pretence of Love and Respect can there be without a visible Profession? The very Hypocrite therefore desires to make a Blaze, to justifie his pretence of Respect: take off that Mask and you discover Rancour and Enmity in his Soul against the Holiness and Severity of the Gospel. Therefore declared Enemies and Insides put the Name of Christ far from them: And therein they declare their Hatred, as our Saviour tells the Jews they did, Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father.

Finally, A Profession is necessary from every one, for the encouragement and strengthning of the Cause, Interest and Members of Christ in the World. By our Example we shou'd invite and draw others on, to lift into his Interest and engage in his Cause. We shou'd use all our Reputation and Influence for the Service of our Lord. Our Courage may animate and imbolden others, and our Light shining before Men may provoke them to glorifie our Father which is in Heaven. We all have our proper Orb and Sphere, some higher and greater than others, wherein we may influence to the Advancement and Propagation of Religion in the World. The Stars of lesser glory, that do but twinkle in the Firmament, yet have their Degree of Light and Influence; derived, 'tis popularly said, from the Sun, as every

[†] Jo. 18. 37. 19. 14, 15

Saint's is from the Sun of Righteoufness; yet as thefe ferve in the Firmament as well as adorn it, so do ther in the Church. Moreover, profane and wicked Men allure others to fin by their Example; Why may not the Exemplary Conversation of Saints as powerfully recommend the Ways of Holiness! Let us at least try how far it will go. He that fets up for the Devil's Kingdom shall have many Profelytes; an Affociation is easily form'd in this Case: let us try if a Combination for God may not outgrow and prevail over all the Confederacies for Hell. What advantage they have for Number, we have for real Strength, an unfeen Invisible Force fighting for us, the Mountain covered and furrounded with Chariots of Fire. | Ye are of God, little Children, and have overcome them: because greater is be that is in you than he that is in the World.

Moreover, by our Presence and Company we may affist and help them that are engaged in the Ways of God. As an Army encourage one another by their Multitude, where every Man is the others Defender. United Strength, tho' in its Individuals it be small, yet in its Union may be great. We need one another's Countenance and Affistance. The Apostle Paul accepted gratefully the help of the meanest, and we ought (fays the Apostle Fobn) to be fellow-belpers to the truth.

the Apostle John) to be fellow-belpers to the truth.

Especially, if the Truth is persecuted this heartens us against suffering. So we read that St. Paul
thanked God and took Courage; when the Brethren
came from Rome some fifty, some thirty Miles
to meet him *. It gave him new Life to see so
many Professors of the Gospel there, who had
the Courage to own him in his Chains, and wait

^{# 1} John 4. 4. * Acts 28. 15.

on him tho' a Prisoner through the whole Country. And indeed, this is it felf alone a great and worthy End of a Profession; whereas it is a finful betraying it, if when Providence calls us to own a fuffering Member of Christ we defert him. † At my first answer no Man stood with me. but all Men for fook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. We shou'd never give a Man that suffers for the Truth reason for any fuch Complaint. I looked on my right-hand and beheld, but there was no Man that would know me: refuge failed me, no Man cared for my Soul. The Soul of every Saint is precious in it felf, how much more when the Caufe of Christ is imbarqu'd in the same Bottom: fhall we with the Disciples. for sake him and fly!

We see the manifest Reason for a Visible Profession, why we should have our Lamps in our Hands and let the World see whose we are, Whom

we are waiting for, or going forth to meet.

All which is a sufficient Argument and Motive to us, That we hold fast our Profession. You have begun well, go on and hold out to the End, whatever Difficulties or Hazards may be in the way. And this is no more than what our Lord has done before us, who bare witness to the Truth || in the Face of Death. From whence the * Charge of Constancy is enforced on us: I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickness all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a Good Confession. This holy Apostle had himself confessed his Saviour before Falix †, and because it both teaches us what a good Profession is, and how it is to be frankly made when

^{† 2} Tim. 4. 16. || John 18. 37. * 1 Tim. 6. 13. † A&s. 24. 14. 15, 16.

call'd for, I will transcribe the whole of it.—
This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and the Prophets; and have hope toward God,— that there shall be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the Just and Unjust: and herein do I exercise my self to have always a Conscience void of offence toward God and toward Man.

Thus Fellow-Christians, let us follow on in the Name and Spirit of our Saviour and his Apostles, let no Storm of Temptation blow your Lamp out: ask daily new Supplies of the Spirit, and every Day renew your Strength, and let your Path shine more and more: the nearer the Bridegroom may be, the more Light your Lamp ought to give, and the greatest Blaze of all as Life goes out.

All the further Use I shall make of the Doctrine is in this one Inference; That if a Profession is necessary; much more is it so to live according to our Profession. Your Profession is of Holiness: let your Care be to live holily. Hypocrisie is in many respects as bad as avowed Profaneness, therefore the Portion of Hypocrites is worse than that of Heathens and Insidels. Let our Life so answer to our Lips, that it may be seen that we are true Men ||. Two things I wou'd set my self zealously to reprove, the Defects of some Mens Profession, and that others reproach and contradict theirs by living Irreligiously.

1. The Defect of many in their Profession shou'd be reproved. Some call themselves Christians, and yet seek not Baptism for themselves or their Families. Is this as the last Words of the ascending Saviour do require and enjoin*? Yet

[|] Gen. 42. 11. * Matth. 28. 19, 20.

how many do forget 'em? and live easie without owning Christ in this appointed Way! Who tho' they see here is Water, and are told that so all Nations are to be discipled, nay, tho' they will be ready to say they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart, yet have never so much as ask'd, What doth hinder that I should be haptised? A shameful defect on us, so peculiarly our own in this Land, and one wosul Essect of the narrow Principles our Fathers generally began upon in the sounding of these Churches; that I believe no professing People under Heaven has the like to show and blush at.

As for the publick and folemn Recognition of the Baptismal Vow by those that have been baptised in their Infancy, it is a thing unknown almost among us, unless when People come up to the Lord's Table, which very few do confidering our Numbers, or when they feek Baptism for their Children. Whereas the Profession of all our Youth is maimed for lack of this: they having never taken their Baptismal Engagements on themselves fince they are grown up, and are externally Christians no further than as their Parents made them; by no sufficient solemn Act of their own have fignified their free Consent to the Covenant they are under. The Pastors of this Country are very fensible of this Lameness and Disorder upon us, as well as other excellent Persons abroad t have bewailed it among themselves; and not two Years fince they came to this Resolution and Engagement at their general Convention in Boston, 'That by the help of God

[†] See Mr. Calamy's Practical Discourse concerning Vows: And the Causes of Corruption among Christians: And more at large Mr. Hanmer's learned Exercitation on Confirmation.

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they wou'd make it their Business personally to discourse with the young People of their respective Flocks, and with all possible Prudence and Goodness in their Pastoral Visits labour to win their Consent to the Covenant of Grace in all the glorious Articles of it, to prepare 'em for a Publick and Solemn Recognition of their Baptism,— And that if any shall obstinately resule so to recognize their subjection to the Discipline of Christ in his Church, they shall be faithfully admonished. I wish the People wou'd take the Judgment of their Pastors, and regard their Concern, so as to reform this gross Desect in their Profession.

Another is, That so few of them that do renew their Covenant (as it is customary with us to fpeak) do proceed unto the Lord's Table. They ftop short here, as if this were a proper Station for em, and here they might laudably fix their Foot. It is plain hence, that it is not fo much a ferious Sense of the Covenant Bonds they are under that brings'em to this, as to qualifie themfelves for the Baptism of their Children, which when they have gain'd we hear no more of 'em, tho' that fame Recognition of the Lord's Covenant must give 'em a right to the Lord's Table if they fought it, and does in the fight of God qualifie them if they make it uprightly. It looks therefore to me as if People took the one to be a Form void of any Solemn Obligation unto Holiness compared with the other. For why elle can they fo readily venture on the One, and be fo much afraid of the Other? If they confider'd the Sacredness and Awfulness of the One, they wou'd not crave it, and at the fame time not be preparing for the Other. And this that I am speaking of runs us into another great De-

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feet also, which is—that only one Parent ordinarily does this great Duty, and the other wholly excuses him or her self: whereas they ought both of 'em to have renew'd their Covenant to be the Lord's, ordinarily long before they had

come together in a Marriage Covenant.

But to return, The general Neglect of the Lord's-Supper is another scandalous Stain upon the Profession of this People. It looks as if Men had forgot or renounc'd their Baptism: Or, as if the Crofs of Christ were an Offence to them, and they were asham'd of it: What a strange thing is it, that all our Hopes are built on the death of Chrift, and there is this one standing Memorial of his death in the Church, and yet Men and Women of thirty or fifty years of Age have never once shown forth their Saviour's death according to his Commandment! Do thefe make Profession of Faith in Christ and Obedience to him? Why, they won't be able scarce to plead another Day that they have eaten and drank in his presence. How have such taken their Lamps and gone forth to meet the Bridegroom, whenas he has faid - Thus you are to do till I come! Do fuch Men think he will ever come again to punish their Difrespect and Disobedience?

Some there are moreover, that wou'd be thought Christians, and yet put the greatest discrespect on all the Ordinances. They are of two sorts, who deny 'em or never come to 'em. The first pretend to so much Spirituality as to be above all outward Means: their Religion lies in Quietism and Contemplation, and a few inward Impulses are their Rule and Oracle. Very far is this from a professing the Religion of Christ, who is the true Light: He himself fulfilled all Righteousness, even all the Sacred Rites which God had sanctified

and ordained; and while he was doing fo the Spirit like a Dove descended on him, and the Father by a Voice from Heaven declar'd him to be his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. It looks like an ignorant, uninstructed Syrian, to rave and fay, he may come out and bless me in the Spot where I stand, and whilst I lift my Soul to him in my common Calling. For confider, thou faucy Mortal, if God may not tye thee to his own Way and Means, and suspend his Grace and Spirit, and all the Bleffings of his Covenant if you contemn them. As Naaman deserv'd to have his Leprosie remain, if he wou'd needs despise the Waters of Jordan, wherein he was directed to wash. For what the' the Waters of Damascus were as good and fair in themselves, yet to this God chose to derive Vertue to cleanse him. What Israelite but wou'd have bow'd and made haste to the fanctified Waters. But all will grant me this, that it is a deep Wound of our Profession to deny or vilifie these or those external Observances, if Christ has really ordained them.

Let me therefore turn to profane People who have no scruple about his Institution of them, and yet seldom attend any of 'em: for it has been the manner of some from ancient Times, || to forsake the Assemblies for Worship. But are these Professor? Are they Christians? That seldom go to the House of God, or take the Advantage of any Excuse to stay at home: if they have not Cloaths sine enough for their Vanity, or if there be a little Rain falling, or if the Street's dirty, or the Weather cold. This is next even not to a

form of Godlines.

And indeed the People that do thus, nay, fometimes those that do but keep away from the

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[#] Heb. 10. 35.

Lord's Table, try to shelter themselves under this miserable Distinction, that they are not equally Profellors with others, and so may allow themselves in what the other may not. A shame and scandal to those that use it! And yet what more rife with some, or customary than for a Neighbour-Christian to say to another - One of your Profesfion -! Why, I pray, what is this Man and his Profession? - Only he is in full Communion (as we use to say) as you ought to be too; he stands visibly Compleat among the Worshippers of Christ, which to their shame so many do not. Or, it may be he frequents the House of Prayer, embraces all Opportunities he can conveniently to hear the Word, or he worships God in his Family, and is a strict keeper of the Sabbath, -None of which things you do. You mean this when you say - He is a Professor. But I beseech you-, Do not you also call your self a Chriflian? Are you not baptis'd as well as he, and under the same Vow and visible Sign that he is? Or, have you ever retracted it, and renounc'd that worthy Name that was call'd over you? Have you turn'd Infidel? No, God forbid! But why do you fart so? For you are then a Professor as much as he, only not fo good a one within, nor so compleat without. You have promised as much as he has come up to, and you pretend to stand to the Sacred Promise. The difference is only this, he professes and performs, you profess much and do nothing: He pays his Vows, you vow and do not pay: he worships Christ having nam'd him, you name him and show no regard at all to him. Thus I have cenfur'd fome grofs Defects in what many call, and will be affronted if we do not also own in them to be, a Profession of Christianity. The Lord rebuke 'em, and amend us!

2. These Defects pave a broad Way to the reproaching and giving the Lye to our Profesfion in a vicious ungodly course of Life. I ought here to arraign Profaneness and Licentiousness, which shou'd not be named among Christians. For our Tongues have declar'd for Christ, and shall the same Tongues now defie him? The profane, the lewd, the railing Mouth does fo. Our Speech shou'd show that we have been with Jesus and belong to him: 'Thou also art one of his Disciples, for thy speech betrayeth thee. O, my Brethren, when shall vain words bave an end! Shou'd a Christian reason with unprofitable Talk, or with Speeches

wherewith he can do no Good!

But the last Commendation is to do well, to live balily. If we will profess Christ Jesus, (and God forbid we shou'd do otherwise) let us walk in bim, let us fludy in all things to adorn bis Doctrine. But as for wicked Profesfors let them know. their Lives reproach Christ more than their Tongues or Looks can honour him: like Judas under a Mask of Duty and Affection they betray and fell him, and any paltry Lust is the Price he is valued at. A Jew may go for a Christian as well as he: for the Jews deny the Holy One in Words, you do it in Deeds, more credible than Words in all Cases: they crucify'd him once and put him to open shame, you do it afresh daily *: they blasphem'd him, you occasion the same to that worthy Name † they put on him a kind of Crown and Purple, and then bow'd to him in folemn Mock, and struck him with a hellish Spleen; which spiritualiz'd is just your Worship and Disobedience; they abhor the Form of Christianity, you the Rower of it : they

Heb. 6. 6. † Rom. 2. 24. 1 Tim, 6. 1. Titus 2.5.

deny they have any fuch King as Jesus, you fwear Allegiance and play the Traitors, doing as much against him, his Crown and Dignity, as

the most avowed Enemy of 'em all.

But if I turn my Eyes upon the best Profesfors, how many Spots are on the Best! How dim their Lamps! How far unworthy of him who is Light, and in whom is no Darkness at all! But verily, some do not so much as glimmer: they have dark Lanthorns if any in their Hand, a Shell

of a Profession only.

Our Case and State is very much like that of the Church in Sardis |, and we may take to our felves the Reproof, the Exhortations and the Encouragement given them -, Thou haft a Name that thou livest and art dead: Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I bave not found thy Works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard; and bold fast and repent. -. Thou hast a few Names which have not defiled their Garments, and they (hall walk with me in white for they are worthy. He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white Raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels. He that bath an Ear, let bim bear what the Spirit Saith unto the Churches.

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H Rev. 3. 1, - 6.

MATTH. XXV. 2, 3, 4.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolifb.

They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oil with them:

But the wife took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps.

TEre is the Distinction and different Character of the Virgins, which Character is ju-. flify'd and prov'd from their Carriage and Management. Some are styled Wife and others call'd Foolish, the Instance wherein their Wisdom or their Folly did appear being this - They that

were foolift took, &c.

It may not be amiss to pass a Reflection on the Division here made as to the Number on either Side, which is equal: for of the Ten five are supposed to be Wise and five Foolish. Just half good. But is it thus in the Visible Church? Are there among Professors as many Wife as Foolish? As many fincere Christians in the World as Hypocrites? Wou'd our Lord teach us this? No. For as our Experience and ordinary Observation wou'd disprove it, so he himself has told us that of the many that are called few are chosen. Every Circumstance of a Parable is not to be built upon, only so far as may subserve to the General Scope of it; as this Division may so far do as it fignifies, That all are not Israel that are of Ist rael, but that among the professed Worshippers of Christ there are many false, and Insincere. to commission would be a property to the standard to If

If I cou'd think any other Instruction meant us from hence, I shou'd fall in with that offer'd by. the late excellent Arch-Bishop Tillotson ||, who obferves the charitable Decorum which our Saviour keeps in this as well as in the rest of his Parables, as if he wou'd fain suppose and hope that among those who enjoy the Gospel and make Profession of it, the Number of them that are truly Good is equal to those that are Bad. Which Decorum scems carefully observed also in the Parable of the Prodigal, where for one Son that left his Father and took Riotous Courses, there was another that staid always with him, and continued constant to his Duty. And in the Parable of the ten Talents, two are supposed to improve the Talents committed to them, for one that made no Improvement. Here seems to be a remarkable Bials to the Charitable Side, for this reason perhaps, partly to instruct us to extend Charity towards all Christians as far as with reason we can; and partly to reprove an odious uncharitable 'Temper, which (he observes) prevailed among the Jews of old, and has fince among Christians to their infinite scandal.

It is indeed best to err on the charitable Side, and no Temper is more hateful than a censorious, jealous, judging one, suspecting Every Body of Evil but Our selves, and a Few whom we are fond of, confining the Church of Christ to a narrow Compass, and Salvation to Those only of our own Persuasion: ('the abominable Spirit of the Church of Rome, whose Charity is no better than her Faith.) You may observe that our Lord would not countenance One!

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See his Sermon on this Parable.

who, either out of Curiofity, or from a narrow Judging Spirit, put this Question to him- Lord, are there few that shall be saved? * Our Lord would not vouchfafe him any direct Answer to gratify him, but takes the Occasion to admonish Him and Others to strive to enter in at the strait Gate, for fo far he wou'd tell him, That many will feek to enter in, and shall not be able. You see I wou'd, as readily as any one, catch at the least Shadow that makes for Charity. Some particular Doctrines and Duties I have often observ'd the greatest Souls a little partial to: I the less wonder to find weak Minds fo, and to feel it very fenfibly my felf fometimes, and in the present Case especially. There are fome Practices and Principles that look Catholick. which tho' I can't reason my self into, yet I bear a fecret Reverence to in others, and dare not for the World speak a Word against Their Souls look enlarg'd to me, and mine does fo the more to my felf, for not daring to judge 'em. This excuses, nay, makes me the more to venerate the Gloss above-nam'd; it agrees so to the whole Life and known Temper of that most Reverend Person, the greatest Example of Charity and Moderation that the Age produc'd; who was the furthest from being wont to strain a Text that could be yet could not forbear when that occur'd to him, which his Soul was fo much and fo defervedly swallow'd up in therefore being to make only Sist fort Observations on this whole Parable, yet this is one dendred away more wine

But to return, It is the Distinction and different Character of the Virgini, and not the Division, that we are to attend to. There is a vast Dif-

Luke 19. 19 14 1 tollow in sale

ference

ference between Men, in respect of Wisdom and Folly: If this is visible with respect to Civil Matters and the Concerns of this World, much more is it so with relation to Spiritual Concerns, those of our Souls and the World to come. Some Men have more Prudence and Discretion than others, or at least use their Parts better: So some are wise for their Souls, while others seem bereav'd altogether, and utterly destitute

of Understanding.

By Oil for their Lamps, and in their Veffels, is to be understood the Graces of the Holy Spirit governing in the Hearts and Lives of Christians, growing and improving by diligent and constant Exercise. The Wife have Grace, and take care for a Furure Supply to feed their Lamps; the Foolish have Lamps, and something instead of Oil to make a feeming Blaze; by which they deceive the World at prefent, but in the Day of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, when Hypocrify shall be laid open, these False Lights shall go out. The Wife are provident against the Time to come, the Foolish improvident, and careful no further than for a goodly Show at prefent. Regenerate, Illuminated, Holy People, are the Wife; who have Oil in their Vessels, Grace in their Hearts, which shines in the Life, and adorns their Profession.

But before I go further, it may not be amiss to enquire, In what Respects Oil in a Lamp may be an Emblem of Grace in the Heart. The Wife took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps.

I would premise, That Oil is made to signify, in Scripture and Ancient Use, what nothing can so universally answer to as the Sanctifying Grace of God. As,

It was made of Old to fignify Beauty, Oil that maketh Man's Face to fine. So is Grace the Beauty

Beauty of the Soul, its original Beauty restor'd, its Renovation after the Holy and Glorious Image of God*. The Soul is become all fair in the Eyes of Heaven; is renowned in the Heavenly World for its Beauty, the Divine Comli-

pels being put upon it.

Again, Oil was of Old one great Part of the Riches and Wealth of the World: The Increase of Corn, and Wine, and Oil, together with their Herds and Flocks, were the Eastern Riches. The Rock pour'd me out Oil, faid Job, reflecting on the Abundance which he once had. Therefore it was accounted a Princely Gift, meet for the Magnificence of Solomon to bestow, and the Dignity of Hiram to receive †. [By the way, let me fay, This show'd the Simplicity of Former Ages, even the Inventory of their Wealth ||, We have Treasures in the Field of Wheat, and of Barley, and of Oil, and of Honey. Delicacy, and Toys, and Trifles of Art, were not fo much fet by as they have been fince. So Grace is (a) the durable Riches.

Again, Oil was used Emblematically of Homour. Witness that Rite of Anointing Kings, and that Stile of the Kings of Israel, (b) The Lord's Anointed. Hence Saul's Fall was lamented in this Phrase, (c) That his Shield was vilely cast away, as if it had not been anointed with Oil. The Antiquity of this Custom of Anointing Sovereign Princes, appears from Jotham's Parable, The Trees went forth to anoint a King over them, &c. And because the Name [Anointed] imports the highest Dignity, therefore it is given to the Son of God, being the English of the Hebrew Word

^{*}Col. 3. 10. † 1 Kings 5. 11. HJer. 41. 8. (4) Pro. 8. 18. (b) 1 Sam. 26. 9. (c) 2 Sam. 1. 21.

Messiah, and the Greek Word Christ. So the Grace of God does enoble and dignify the Souls of Men; it is their being born of God, and partaking of a Divine Nature; which was Man's Crown in Innocence, when he was made

but little lower than the Angels.

Moreover, Oil is in Scripture made to fignify foy, Pleasure, and Delight in the Fulness of Prosperity and Honour. We read of the Oil of Gladness (d), and the Oil of foy, (e), which answers to the Garments of Praise. So when our Lord would direct his Disciples not to appear to Men to fast, he bids them, among other Things (f) to anoint their Heads. So the Graces of the Spirit do cheer, refresh, and rejoyce the Soul ||

Once more, Oil and Anointing was of Ancient Use in the Consecration of Things and Persons unto God. So Aaron and his Sons were separated to their High and Holy Office: And so the Tabernacle and all that was therein, the Altar and all its Vessels were anointed*. So is the Unction of the Holy One, the Anointing that ye have received, the Surrender of the Soul to God, and its Reception into a real but most special Relation

and Union to Christ.

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But finally, That which was most frequently signify'd by Anointing, and the Use of Oil in Scripture, is Holiness it self, and the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, and sometimes an Eminency of them. Therefore of Him who is emphatically the Anointed; we read, That he received not the Spirit by measure, And of all Regenerate People the Apostle John says, † We

^{7, 8. 19. 8, 10.} Levit. 8. 10, 11, 12. I 1 Jo. 2. 20, 27.

have an Unction of the Holy One, -which Anointing abideth in you, - teacheth you of all things; and is Truth, and is no Lie. In the same kind of Phrase does St. Paul speak of the Sanctifying Influences. Illumination, and Confolations of the Holy Spirit ||, Now be which establishes us with you in Christ, and bath anointed us, is God; who hath also fealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts. To this the manifold Use of Oil under the Law of Moses had respect : We read there of unleaven'd Cakes temper'd with Oil, and Wafers anointed with Oil, and on the Meat-Offering of Fine Flour Oil was to be pour'd-: Which, in one and other, fignify'd the Influences of the Spirit whereof the Sincere Offerer should be made to partake, and in the Exercise whereof he ought to be when he made his Offering.

After all that has been faid of the Ancient Use of Oil, and what it was used to signify, we shall not wonder that our Saviour in this Parable makes Oil to signify the Truth of Grace. But yet there is something more particular to be said of the Propriety of the Phrase in the Text, scil.

Oil in their Lamps. As,

First, As it is Oil in the Lamp which is the Cause of the Light it gives, so is it Grace in the Christian's Heart that shines forth in his Life and Conversation. The Path of the Just is in Scripture compar'd to the shining Light, and our Saviour calls his Disciples the Light of the World; and every Christian is supposed to give some Light, Let your Lights shine before Men. Again, The Way of the Wicked is called Darkness, but Good Men are called the Children of Light, and

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Light. Now what does the Holy Ghost intend by all these Modes of Speaking? save only to let us know, That Grace in a Child of God, as it is his Illumination, so it will be bright and conspicuous in his Conversation, and is both beautiful and useful for others to behold. There is much of God, of Heaven, of Holiness and Devotion to be seen in some Men: Whence is this? but from the Grace of God in 'em: This then is like Oil in a Lamp, which gives Light to all in

the Room, they fee our good Works.

Secondly, As Oil taking Fire does burn fiercely, and yields a vehement Flame, so is it Grace in the Soul that makes it warm, zealous, and fervent in ferving God. This inflames the Soul with Love to God, and Defires to His Glory: Which burning Love the Spoufe likens to glowing Coals of Fire *. Where there is Life, there are also some degrees of Warmth; yea, even in a Corps, after Life is gone, there will be forme small Remains of it for a little time. While Grace is in Exercise, the Soul will feel it self enliven'd, heated, invigorated in Holy Duties: But where it is strong and growing there will the Flame be fiercer, till in the Perfection of it, 'twill be in some Likeness to what we read of our Saviour, into whose Lips Grace was - The Zeal of thy House bath consumed me tot od hiw another

Thirdly and Lastly, As it is the Oil in the Lamp that feeds the Flame, so Grace in the Heart does a good Profession. It is a Fountain or Living Spring slowing over in the whole Life; a rich Treasure, a large Stock liv'd and

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^{*} Cant. 8. 6. † John 1. 19.

fpent on, but not diminish'd; like the Widow's Cruise of Oil, that failed her not all the Days of Dearth. Such are the Supplies of the Spirit ||, so necessary and so efficacious for our persevering in and honouring our Profession. For, as a Lamp will not keep long burning without a Stock of Oil to feed it, so neither will a Profession last and live, if there is not a good and rich Stock of Grace to maintain it. —— Grace is a good Provision made against the Evil Day, and Time of Need, but when the Day of Trial comes, the graceless Professor sinds nothing within him to preserve that Flame which he seem'd to have.

This is all I see necessary to say for the Illustration of the Phrases in the Text. They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oil with them: but the wise took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps. I shall now proceed to raise some Ob-

servations from the Words.

1. That Sincerity and Holy Living is the highest Wisdom of Man, Hypocrify and Ir-

religion the greatest Folly.

2. That among Visible Professors there are many infincere and unfound. And five were

foolifh.

3. That a Profession, without Grace in the Heart, governing the Life and Conversation, signifies nothing. They that were foolish took their

Lamps and no Oil in them.

4. That Wise and Holy Persons will be solicitous for continual Supplies of the Spirit of Grace, for their Improvement and Perseverance in the Ways of God. But the wise took Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps.

I. That Sincerity and Holy Living is the highest Wisdom of Man, Hypocrify and Irreligion the greatest Folly. The Foolish and the Wise in the Text, are Names for the Hypocrite and the Sincere Believer, the Wicked Professor, and the Godly. So is the World and the Church divided, there are but Two sorts or Denominations of Men, Many Fools and a few Wise: As there are but Two Places in the Judgment, the Right-hand and the Left, and but Two States to pass into, Heaven or Hell.

It lies upon me to justify this Character, which is a Point of great Use as well as a main Thing in the Parable; wherein, as in a Glass, every one may see his own Face, and the Figure he makes in the World. It is good for us to be often reproach'd by our Consciences with the Folly of our wicked Ways; and Shame is one Passion by which the Holy Spirit of God comes at the Consciences of Men for their Awakening.

How often is Religion recommended to us under the Name of Wisdom in the Holy Scripture? Moses makes this his Argument, when he exhorts Israel to Obedience*, Behold I have taught you Statutes and Judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me,—Keep therefore and do them, for this is your Wisdom and your Understanding—. The Wise Solomon was an accomplish'd Judge, and he thinks nothing worthy to be call'd Wisdom save only Piety: They are the Wise in Heart (he says) that receive the Commandments †. The Psalmist also is of the same Judgment, The Mouth of the righteous speaketh Wisdom: And the Apostle James

^{*} Deut. 4. 5, 6. † Prov. 3. 35. 10. 8.

speaks of the Wisdom from above, which is pure

and full of good Fruits |.

On the other hand, Sin and Irreligion is as often branded with the odious Name of Folly. The meek Mofes to reproaches the crooked and perverse Ifraelites, (a) O foolish People and unwise!-It is a proper Confession for a Sinner bewalling himself, I have played the fool (b). It was of Old a severe Reproof of heinous Wickedness, (d) A committing Folly in Ifrael, Or one of the Fools in Ifrael. The foolish shall not stand in thy Sight, says David (c): Whom does he call the Foolish? it follows, Thou batest all Workers of Iniquity. Of all such it may be truly said, (e) Their way is their Folly, and in the greatness of their Folly they go astray. fore thus also does the Wisdom of God address to Sinners (f) For sake the foolish and live, and go in the way of Understanding.

And now what need is there of any further Proof?—May we not acquiesce in the Judgment of God, who is the Only Wise? He knows the Fool and the Transgressor. Yet to justify the Wisdom of God in this Matter, I will set my self a little to consider the Nature and Properties of Wisdom and Folly, and see how natural and applicable they are to Religion and Irreligion. It is an Argument that has been often labour'd in, by very Excellent Hands ||, and I shall not be

able to bring any new Light to it.

Wisdom takes in both Sapience and Prudence: The First consists in the knowing whatsoever Things are true and good, together with the best

[|] Jam. 3. 17. (a) Deut. 32. 6. (b) 1 Sam. 26. 21. (c) Judg. 20. 6, 10. 2 Sam. 13. 13. (d) Pfalm 5. 5. (e) Pfalm 49. 13. Prov. 5. 23. (f) Prov. 9. 6. || Arch-bishop Tillotton, Sir Matthew Hale, Mr. Norris.

Method of arriving at them: The Last confists in a fixed Disposition to chuse the Means of Truth and Happiness, and diligently to improve them. That is to fay, Wisdom confists first in the Knowledge of our True Good, then in discerning the Means that most directly and infallibly lead to it; and laftly, in a vigorous constant Use of those Means for the attaining it. On the other hand, Folly appears in the Ignorance of our True Good, or in the Neglect of it when known, or in the taking wrong and ridiculous Measures to attain it. As Wisdom in God respects ' his ordering and disposing his Things to ' the best Ends and Purposes, so Wisdom in Man is to chuse best for himself, and then to use the best Means with utmost Diligence to compass what we truly apprehend to be best for us. In short, Wisdom is 'the minding our chief ' End, and labouring by all Means to promote it. And by this one Rule we may judge of the Wisdom of a Religious Life, and the Folly of a Wicked one. I shall therefore speak a little to these Three General and Comprehensive Properties of Wisdom, The knowing our Chief Good, Our discerning and chusing the True Way and Means of attaining it, And our Diligence in using those Means.

and understand their Chief Good and Last End. As much Ignorance as there is in us, so much Folly will there be: For the Knowledge may have a distinct Consideration from Wisdom, in as much as a Man may know much better than he acts, yet Wisdom can't be without Knowledge; especially not without the Knowledge of those Things that are of the greatest Weight, Consequence, and Necessity, and of what does G

most immediately relate to the Acquisition of

thefe.

Now the Scripture gives us the Knowledge of our Chief Interest, Business in the World, and the End of our Being. It teaches us why we were born, and what we have to do; that there is a God to be ferv'd and glorify'd; that we have Souls to fave, a Saviour to get an Interest in, Everlasting Life to secure, and Deliverance from Eternal Death. It informs us in the Means and Way unto all these Things; how, we may work out our own Salvation, enjoy the Love of God, and be happy for ever. He bath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee ? There is an Infinite and Eternal Good to be enjoy'd, there is Pardon, Grace, and Mercy to be had: These are the one necessary and important Interest of Man, they are our Blessedness and our Life; the Good Part, that can never be taken from us again: Now that which qualifies us for, entitles us unto, and will at last bring us to this Blessedness, that is our Wisdom.

But Irreligion is Folly for this very Reason, becanse it proposes some mean insignificant End to it self, some little Worldly Interest, some paltry Lust or other, some sensitive Finite Good, and too often also that only Imaginary; and this Trisle, this Phantom it places in the Seat of God, mistaking it for the proper Happiness of Man. This is gross Ignorance and Folly, and is certain of ending in Shame and Disappointment; for it bounds all its Cares within the narrow Compass of this short Life, a dying Body, and a perishing World; as if there were no Immortal Part, nor Unseen and

Spiritual World to be car'd for.

It is true that all Men are a-thirst and enquiring after Good: Who will shew us any? But the Folly of the most by far appears in their chusing amis, mistaking their proper End and Happiness, or regardless of it. And it is true again, That there is a bewitching Appearance of Good in the Sins Men court; but really they are the most formidable Evils, only wash'd over to take with the weak Eye of Sense. Some court unnecessary Good: This is Folly, when but one Thing is needful. To fawn after Worldly Honours, or scrape for Riches, or hunt after vanishing Pleasures; when indeed our Life consistetb not in these Things, not so much as our True Felicity at present. This is Folly to center and terminate our Cares upon unprofitable Vanity. Men build on Imagination: An airy Idea they have of huge Satisfactions to be found in finful Courses; but foolishly enough, as they are soon convinc'd. Yet, which is the strangest piece of Madness of all, after many Trials and Experiments, their Expectations rife again, and what a Man has found a hundred times over to be Shadows, Dreams, Delusions, and a Lie, he courts a-new with double Defires. Sure every Man walketh in a vain Shew, he disquieteth bimself in vain *. Just Reason had the Psalmist to ask, thave all the Workers of Iniquity no Knowledge? They are Words of Astonishment, and carry in them both Admiration and Reprehension; which do with great Pathos and Elegance lament that Ignorance which they charge. The Charge is extensive and universal, but not at all beyond sober Truth: All the Workers of Iniquity, and no Knowledge! Every Sinner, as fuch, utterly de-

Pfal. 39. 6. + 14. 4.

stitute of the least degree of Knowledge! i. e. judging by their Course and Actions. Sin is a strong, astonishing Proof of Ignorance. For, it is presum'd that Knowledge is given Men for their good Conduct and Government; and it is humane and candid to suppose they will use what they have, as much as he that hath Eyes will open 'em to see his Way. It is to incline to the mildest Interpretation of sinful Actions to impute it to Ignorance rather than Malice, to refolve it into Want of Knowledge rather than into meer Venom and Spite. And indeed it looks as if Men had no Notice of the Being, Power, and Excellency of God. | His Ways are always grievous, God is not in all his Thoughts; and, one would think, was never heard of. He will deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord*. As senselesly as impudently he confounds Good and Evil, puts darkness for light and sweet for bitter. He seems wholly ignorant of the World he lives in, its Emptiness, Inflability, Deceits, Vexations. Wou'd he labour so for the Wind? for Froth, a Shadow, a Vapour? No, Its plain the Man thinks it a substantial Good, worth a great deal of Toil and Sweat, and that it will well recompence his Cares and Pains. As for Worldly Honours, how ignorantly do Men think and speak of 'em? What Nonsense is their magnificent Talk of it! A Gilded Bubble, shatter'd by the Breath! A brittle Idol, which vain Fools fee broken to pieces while they are worshiping it. An imaginary Happiness, for there may be real Contempt in the Heart, while the Knee cringes and the Tongue flatters. And how foon do the Names

[|] Pfal. 10. 4. Ifai 26. 10.

of Honour change into those of Contempt? So that at this Day Slaves wear those once exalted Names of Casar, Pompey, Scipio, &c. which this vain changing World once reverenc'd and trembled at. Moreover, the Fool fees not the Poverty of Earthly Riches, He thinks his Houses shall endure for ever, and that he has Goods laid up for many Years. And as to Fleshly Pleasures, he thinks they'll never cloy or fling again; he believes his lying Appetite once more, after all its past Cheats. It shows great Ignorance to be so easily gull'd, and credulous to all the Flatteries of Sense, so often found false and collusive. And then how ignorant feems the Senfualist of the World's Vexations and Afflictions? Would he else expect Rest and Ease for his Soul here? O Sot! that is every Minute at the Mercy of Ten thousand Sorrows, and sees it not! Who but a Fool would build on a merry Life in this Vale of Tears? Or if there were a pretty folid Happiness to be enjoy'd, yet it were a sufficient Mark of a Fool, to be infensible of the Instability of these Things! to bless bis Soul, as if he had a Propriety, and could keep Possession! or as if his Glory cou'd descend after him! Yet less does a Wicked Man feem to know any thing of the World to come, and the distant States that await . the Godly and the Wicked. Does the Man feem to know there is a Heaven of Glory and Blessedness, but never to be enjoy'd by a defil'd Soul? Think you the Ambitious Man ever heard of the Dignity of the Saints in Glory, their Thrones, and Crowns, and Robes of unclouded Light? Knows he that there is a Glorious Court above, where the ETERNAL fits Inthron'd, and the Mediator at his Right-hand, furrounded by Myriads of Noble Spirits, among whom.

whom the Love and Favours of this Glorious King are distributed with an equal but munificent Hand! How happy are they that live for ever in his Presence, and minister unto him, beyond those of the Wise and Magnificent Solomon, whom Queens themselves cou'd envy! Wou'd not the Noble Spirit court only this, knew he of any fuch transcendent and unfading Honour attainable? Wou'd he not tread on Crowns and Scepters, and spurn at Palaces and Thrones, if they wou'd clog his Way to a better and more lafting State of Renown? The very Prince on Earth being but a Vaffal and Worm before the Most High God, and if he be compar'd to an Angel of His, it is a Flight in his Honour, too high for his Mortal State. Again, Do you think the Voluptuous Man knows any thing of the Foys of Heaven, that never cloy or foure? Knew he the least part of the Sweetness of the Sense of God's Love, and the unspeakable Joys he can fill and satiate the Soul with: Knew he the ravish'd Elders Tranfports while they fing the Praises and Victories of the Lamb, their Hearts rifing with their Notes, and keeping way with their Voice: Knew he the Deliciousness of those Eternal Greens and Living Fountains of Waters, where the Lamb, which is in the midst of the Throne, shall lead and feed his Redeemed: Did the Sinner know any thing of this Place of pure and full and endless Pleasure, wou'd he, cou'd he hanker any longer after the dreggy cheap Pleafures of Sin? No, no: He wou'd despile, and hate, and loath them; his Stomach wou'd turn at 'em; his enobled Soul would not relish 'em his past Surfeits wou'd foon end in Antipathy. To give one Instance more, Does not the wretched

wretched Worldling feem altogether ignorant of any durable incorruptible Treasures to be had beyond the Grave? of that better Country, and that City of the Great King, pav'd with his Idoliz'd Gold? Would he not find a Heart to open his rufty Cheft, and empty his mouldy Bags for this better Substance? Would he not give Alms (which he'll as foon his Heart's Blood now) and provide himself Bags which wax not old, a Treature in the Heavens that faileth not, &c. His own Principles of Gain wou'd constrain him, did he understand and credit these Things. Nor does the Sinner feem ever to have heard any thing of a Hell; for wou'd Self-Love and Fear fuffer him to run head-long into that Place of Torments? He knows not that it is for his Life! In a Word, Irreligion shews a Man to be a Stranger to himself, ignorant of his own Frame and Make: That he has a Soul in the Delight and Perfection whereof his Happiness confifts. One wou'd think the Man esteem'd himself only of the upper Order of Brutes, to graze with and perish like 'em. Our Alliance to the Spiritual World, the unseen Vital Substance, the Glory of our Nature, is forgotten. Nor can there be a more gross piece of Ignorance than this, even in the first thing that we have to learn, scil. The Frame of our Nature, and our Relation to a better World. Herein the Sinner is ignorant of the Grasp and Reach of his own Nature, which no Finite Good can ever fatisfy, but it will be cheated after all, hungry, and calling for more. We may as well throw a Shrimp to a Whale. or hold a Thimble-full of Water to Behemoth to drink, whenas be trusteth that be can draw up Fordan into his Mouth: Behold he drinketh up a River, he taketh it with his Eyes. To conclude, Sinners

Sinners feem not to know, or at all imagine, that Truth is the proper Food and Nourishment of a rational Mind, and that Husks are only for Swine: that his Soul can't be nourish'd by the gross Diet of Sense, but is oppress'd and starv'd in the luxurious Surfeits of the Body. Thus Sinners publish their own Ignorance of themselves, and the World they live in, of their own Mortality and Immortality too: for they lay in as it were for the Bodies everlasting Subsistence here below, but make no Provision for the Immortal Spirit when it shall take its slight.

This is to think and speak Scripturally; never to take that for Knowledge which does not Influence to agreeable Practice: For words of sense in Scripture do imply Affection and Action: as, to know God || signifies to acknowledge and regard him and carry it to him as God. I will give bem a heart to know me, and they shall return unto me with their whole heart. A Life alienated from the Life of God argues a Mind full of Vanity, and an Understanding darkned *. But who is a wife Man and endowed with Knowledge, let him shew out of a good Conversation his Works with meekness of Wisdom.

^{2.} Another Property of true Wisdom is to discern and chuse the true Way and Means to compass our last End and Interest. † Wisdom is prositable to direct. In this respect Religion is our Wisdom, and Irreligion the greatest Folly. The undue prosecution of a right End shows our Folly as much as the proposing of a wrong one. Many a Man is right in his End but errs in the Means

H Jer 24.7. 1 John 2. 4. * Eph. 4. 17, 18. Jam. 3. 13.

he uses; and others again are right in the Means to their proposed End, but that it self is wrong. The Children of this World propose meanly for themfelves, and herein are guilty of shameful Folly; but then they pursue this End with Cunning and Art, and so are wifer in their Generation " (in their way) than the Children of Light. On the other hand, the Children of Light propound a good End to themselves, which is their Wisdom, but too often stumble fadly in their Way to it, nay, run out of their Way, and this is their Folly. But to be fure every wicked Professor is quite out, as to the Means which shou'd bring him to his declared End. His professed End is Eternal Happiness in the full Enjoyment of God. but in what Manner does he profecute it? What absurd Ways does the Man take to compass this End, the Salvation of his Soul? At the best he hopes that Bodily Exercise will profit him, a Form and Round of some Duties, especially of Worship and Alms, as the vain Pharisee who pleaded his repeated Fasts before God and his Mercy to the Poor | : Just as our Modern Deifts think that meer Charity will bring 'em to Heaven. again build their Hopes on Ineffective Defires and Flames, presumpruous Joys and a fond confiding in the Mercy of God through the Merits of Christ-; all which without Holiness is a very absurd and preposterous Pretence of pleasing God. Nay, moreover, what direct Ways do not wicked Men take to hinder that which they profess to propound unto themselves? Is a Course of Ungodliness, it may be of every kind of Impiety, at least of some one kind, the Way to honour, please, and come to enjoy God? Or, is it

[|] Luke 18. 12.

not the Way to dishonour, displease him, and damn our selves! To separate us from him, by bringing us under his Wrath and Curse, who is

of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity!

This now is the plain Folly of an Irreligious Life, cross and contrary to his professed End? And so instead of pursuing it, he acts as directly against it as is possible to do. Whereas the Holy Upright Christian, and he only, takes a direct, proper, and infallible Course to Life Everlasting. He seeks after Life in the Gospel Way, by Faith, without which it is impossible to please God. by Repentance without which there is no Remission of Sin, by Holiness without which no Man shall see God. He prays and watches and strives against Sin, he follows after Holiness; this is his Pleafure, that his Burden. He bewails his past Sins, fears Temptations and Falls to come, depends on and cries for that Grace which is able to keep him, is inquisitive after the signs of Grace in him, a critical Observer of the Evidences of it in his Life, infinitely thankful for the least Meafure he can discern, careful to improve it, rejoyces in its increase, is solicitous and insatiable after more; and having attained the most, presses yet on toward the Mark of the Prize of our high Calling, laying himself always, from first to last, at the Feet of the Crucified Tesus, whose Blood purifies, and whose Righteousness justifieth. By a patient Continuance in all this he feels after Glory, Honour, and Immortality. i. e. He wisely takes the fure and only Way unto Eternal Life; the Word of God being his Rule, and the Spirit of God his Counfellor and Conductor.

The Wisdom of the Saint lies in a faithful minding his Rule, which is the inspired Word, which is able to make us wise unto Salvation: with-

out which how shou'd we have stray'd and lost our selves in Ignorance? As we know how soolish the Superstitions of the World have been, where God has not given the Light of Revelation; and where he has given it, the Wisdom of

Man is to study and observe it.

3. And lastly, The other Property of Wisdom is diligently and industriously to improve and use the Means that conduce to our End and Happiness. When we do know our chief Good and last Interest, then to pursue it with Care and Labour. And it is by neglecting this that People generally do most show their Folly. It is not so much Ignorance, as Wilfulness and Stubbornness, or Supineness and unaccountable Inadvertence; that accounts for Mens Sins. And he is the greatest Fool in Nature, that having good Knowledge uses it not for his Conduct and Government, but runs counter to it. On the other hand, this is a main Point of Prudence - Whatever thy band finds to do (fit or necessary to be done to the compassing thy chief End) do it with all thy might.

The good Man does fo. He is laborious and constant in working out his own Salvation: he is not weary of well-doing. As the Husbandman follows the Plow all the Day, till the Darkness of the Night comes on to call him off: or, as the Racer keeps on till he reaches the Goal; and as the fierce Soldier maintains his Ground and advances on his Enemy till there remain none in the Field before him: he works while it is Day. Fidelity is Prudence, faithful and wise go together. * Who then is that faithful and wise Servant, &c. Indisference, Listlesness, Sloth in Mat-

^{*} Matth. 24. 45.

rers of infinite Moment is the Top of Lunacy and Distraction: To know the Means of Life and neglect them! To starve with the Bread of Life in one's Hand, because of the Labour of putting it to the Mouth! To stand still or loyter in the Way to Blessedness when we have Feet to use! So a Fool bas a Price in bis Hand, but no Heart to get Wisdom †.

There are several Properties of Wisdom, reducible to this of Industry in Improving the Means

that lead to our chief End. As,

1. A wife Man will subordinate all his lesser Interests to the Gain of this. Wisdom appears in our making a just Estimate of Things, preferring and chusing Things according to their Intrinsick Goodness, Worth and Value. It is Ignorance and Madness not to give the Preference and first

Place to the best Things.

Religion teaches us to do so: To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength . The good Man is in Asaph's Spirit, (a) Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. He is observant of Solomon's Advice. (b) Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get Understanding. To this Grace submits all other things. Riches are laid out for the better and invisible Inheritance, strength is spent for it, Life and all its Comforts, and all its Advantages are devoted to it.

But does the wicked Man regard at all his main Concernment? Or, does he not make all thoop to some little base Lust or other? One subordinates every thing to the gain of Riches,

[†] Prov. 17. 16. || Matth. 22. 37. (a) Pfalm 73. 25

and fells his Saviour and Soul and Heaven, foregoes any Interest in any of 'em, for a little Money. He knows it to be mould'ring Duft, an uncertain Gain, and that the World is quickly to be burnt up, yet his Heart is buried here and it must be his End. But when these are left by him in the midst of his Days, or if they leave him, in the end he is a fool (c). Some are lovers of pleafure more than of God: not one unruly Appetite shall be denied or mortify'd to get Rivers of Pleasures above, or to avoid Everlasting Burnings. Sense is the God the Man lives to, he serves his Belly, fows to the Flesh. He knows it to be a vile rotting Body, yet facrificeth his Soul and Immortality to it. And after this Manner does every Servant of any particular Sin.

But Religion makes all Things vail to the Supreme Good. The Glory of God has an infinite Preference to all Things else, and he puts a greater Price on his Soul than on many Worlds. Truly a good understanding have all they that do his Commandments: they understand the difference of Things; their Place, Order, and Rank, and they give every Thing its proper and due regard. So is the Kingdom of Heaven like unto a wise Merchant seeking goodly Pearls, who, when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he sold all he had and

bought it.

2. The good Man's Wisdom appears in his industrious Improving of Opportunities and Advantages. This is a great trial of Understanding and Prudence to discern and take the special Seasons, and indeed the only Time to do our Work in. The Wisdom of Religion is manifest in this, that it lays hold on the present Season, it makes baste

⁽c) Jer. 17. 11.

and delays not, it does not defer and procrastinate; but minds the things of our Peace in the Day of it. Whereas the Folly of Sinners is very glaring in the contrary; they lose many precious Seasons of Grace, and put off Convictions for the present, which are never again to be retrieved, upon the poor Promises of a more convenient Season to be had hereafter, and that we will faithfully fet about the Work of Repentance and Righteousness, tho' we can't now find a Heart to them. The Sinner owns that the Work is fitting and necessary, and that it shou'd and must be done, sooner or later, or he is undone: but yet he excuses himself for the present, he hopes either to be of a better Mind to morrow, or that there will be fewer Hindrances then. Thus at the wildest Uncertainty, and on the poorest Grounds that can be, we let go present Advantages for our Salvation. Year after Year this Game of the Slothful lasts, till the Day of Grace is play'd and trifled quite away. The Prime and Flower of our Life is idly wasted and wickedly spent; Sabbaths are loft, and Providences too as well as Sermons; the Relations we stand in not at all answered, wherein it may be we shall not be to morrow; our Gifts and Talents buried or laid aside, tho' we may be call'd to account for 'em this very Day.

Shou'd we think him a wife Man, who having an Opportunity to enrich, and make himfelf (as we fay) for ever, shall neglect to take it? if on some mean Temptation of Sloth or Pleasure he will stay till to morrow, when the Treasure may be gone, another purchase it, or the Seller's Mind change? — Wou'd not the World point at such a Neglect, and wou'd not

the Man befool himself?

Remember, that it is a main Point of Prudence. to take the first Opportunity that is given us for the doing any Thing that is of Weight or Concernment; especially a Thing of the last Consequence to us. If a Man were under the Sentence of Death, and his forfeited Life were offer'd him if so be that to Day he wou'd ask it. shou'd we not call him a Fool if he put it off, on this vain Hope that possibly the same Offer of Grace may be repeated to morrow? Or, if a Man were to die within these ten Days, and an Opportunity of Escape were given him to Day, wou'd he neglect it in expectation of fuch another to morrow? What faid the Angels to Lot while be ling'red? * They first laid hold upon his Hand, the Lord being merciful unto him, and brought him out of the City, and faid to him, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed. To lose that Moment which our Life may depend on is extream Madness, and so is it to promife one Moment to come when we are not fure of one: † Thou fool, this night ... Lot's Wife is a wretched Memorial of humane Weakness and Folly, to lose a Moment's time in her flight from devouring Flames.

3. And laftly, A wife Man will confider Futurity as well as the present Time, and the Issues and Consequences of Things as well as the present Appearance of em, and will provide accordingly. It is the highest Frenzy in an Immortal Creature to overlook Futurity, and regard only the present Life; and in a mortal accountable Creature not to govern his Actions very much by the thoughts of Death, and the Judg-

Gen. 19. 16, 17. † Luke 12. 20.

ment that is after it. A prudent Man foreseeth the Evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and

are punished |.

The folly of Irreligion is, That it has no Forefight: 'tis blind, and intent only on present Gains
and Pleasures, having no sense of the Soul's
Duration nor the Body's Frailty, nor indeed of
any Thing but what it sees and feels. This is
such Stupidity as we shou'd be utterly asham'd
of: for we are not Beasts that know not they
must die, and that perish when they do die. The
Wisdom of Mankind is to consider their latter End.
The good Man thinks much of this, weighs it
well, and prepares for the black Day. He acts
upon this Sense, that he is to live for ever in
another World, and shall need to be happy then
as much as now. Therefore all the days of bis appointed time be waits till bis change comes.

This has always been accounted the highest Wildom of Man, to govern his Life here by the thoughts of dying and of Eternity. Seneca has many wife and excellent Instructions on this Head, which might raise both Wonder and Shame in most Christians. It is storied of the Indian wife Men, called 'Brachmans, that they had their Sepulchers at their Doors, that both upon their going out and coming in they might remember their approaching Change, and govern their Lives by the monitory fight of their Some have kept their Coffins by them Graves. to keep their Diffolution in mind. Some have chosen Motto's of such a nature for themselves. and those that are usually written on Dials bear this Sense. In short, it is the universal Sense of Mankind, that one of the most effectual Courses

[|] Prov. 22. 3.

for our good Conduct in this World, is to be frequent in the serious Remembrance of another. So Moses thought, when he made it his One Wish for Israel *, O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they wou'd consider their latter end. He was himself a most wise Man, and had had all the Advantages of a learned and Princely Education in Pharaoh's Court: But all the Science in the World wou'd not make a Man wise in his Account, who is forgetful of his latter End. The Apostle places Wisdom in the same thing †, See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as

fools but as wife, redeeming the time.

Our present Peace, and Proficiency, and future Safety, does much depend on it. It keeps the Mind ferious and under great Awe: it prevents many a Sin and as many Disquiets of Conscience: it promotes good Frames in the Soul, gives great Force to the Motives of the Gospel, and makes Men have a fingle Respect to Conscience and Duty: it sets the World in a true Light, an empty, vain, deceitful Thing as it is; and it shows Sin in its true Colours, as the Mischief and Enemy of our Souls: It shews a Man himself, and the measure of his Days, how frail he is; and it leads him to consider the State of his Soul, and the Misery that awaits him unless he repent; and it is a Spur and Goad in his Side that he timely do fo. And these are such weighty useful Thoughts, that no Man can be content to be without, and not show himself a Fool.

This is some Account of the Wisdom of a Religious Life, and the Folly of Sin. And now let us turn our selves, to behold Wisdom and Madness and Folly— and we shall see that Wisdom excelleth Folly as far as Light excelleth Darkness. So far the

^{*} Deut. 32. 29. + Eph. 5. 15.

Saint outshines the Sinner: for Wisdom indeed makes the Face to shine. A good Man, as such, is wise as an Angel of God. He resembles the Holy Angels in their Moral Perfection, their greatest and most Divine Excellency; for this is more their Brightness than their Intellectual Accom-

plishments.

The Devil is a Spirit of great Knowledge, yet is black as Darkness it self, and the first of Fools; nay, is so the rather because of his Knowledge, against which he sins, having left his Throne of Light. We come next to them, who are enlightned by the Gospel and exalted unto Heaven, and yet continue in Sin: for, as he was in Heaven and left it, so we have Heaven opened to us, Life and Immortality brought to light; we know it also to be our chief Good and last End, and are invited to it, and yet despise it. Infatuated Men! Well does the Wisdom of God address you, How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and fools hate knowledge—!

But I must needs add a particular Thought or two on the folly of Hypocrisie; that Sin above others. The Parable calls for this, because the foolish Virgins here spoken of are such as however profess Faith in Christ; they have their Lamps and are looking out for the coming of the Bridegroom; but they took no Oil in their Lamps, and therefore are called the Foolish. So that it is the Hypocrite or unsound Professor that is the Fool. And indeed, a Heathen or prophane Insidel is not guilty of such glaring Folly in his Practices, as a wicked Professor is. His Profession is every way ab-

furd.

r. It is a monstrous Absurdity whether he believes what he professes, yea or no. The Hypocrite will be angry if we call into question the truth of his Faith: He says— I see, therefore his his Folly remains obvious. For granting him his fay, let him only hear his own strange Account of himself, which is— He sees a Hell open before him and runs into it, the glories of Heaven and slies from 'em, the pointed Sword of Justice and he runs upon it. And if so, Sense is gone as well as Reason, and the dumb As wou'd reprove the Madness; for the Beast sled back from the threatning Sword of the Angel, but you more stupid force on the Sword of Vengeance. This is meer Distraction and Frenzy.

But if the Hypocrite believes not a Word of what he professes, then he is a trisling Fool to make any Profession at all. What a wanton, ludicrous Animal is he! What a ridiculous Figure does he make here at God's Worship! How grave is his Play! How serious a Pageantry! How solemn a Mock! For his Worship is so to him if he do not believe, and worse if

he do.

2. How mean and little is the Hypocrite's Aim, to impose on Men and deceive them into a good Opinion of him? None but a Fool wou'd take so much Pains to do this, or value himself on it when it's done. 'Tis no fuch mighty Feat to be prided in: only requiring a good Meafure of Dishonesty and Impudence. Nor is the Praise of Men to be much set by; 'tis a brittle uncertain Thing, a flash in the Air: to desire which Praise but not deserve it, is but like the filly Dog in the Fable, to lose the Substance for the Shadow. The Hypocrite is a Fool to toil fo much for that which alone by it felf is not worth the having: a Name to live only for a Day! Doubly to be despised hereafter when found among the Dead. As a Dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, shalt thou despise their Image. Nay, methinks Hypocrites will look most despicable to H 2

the Devils themselves, and to them who shall be

damn'd for Profaneness and Infidelity.

2. If the Hypocrite wou'd impose upon God his Folly is yet more gross. If he fay in his Heart, How does God know? Thick Darkness is a Covering to bim that he feeth not. And yet he acts as if he verily thought God were to be deluded with his falle Vizour of Sanctity, and he cou'd hide his Heart from him as well as from Men; as if he thought that the Lord feeth no further than Man feeth, that is to the outward Appearance only. See with what Disdain and Indignation the holy Psalmist reflects on this Infidel Thought, * Understand ye brutish among the People, and ye Fools when will you be wife. And yet if the Hypocrite believes that God fees him through, that bis Eyes are as a flame of Fire which pierce through all Things, and make the Darkness light before him, and the Night to (hine as the Day, he is then guilty of more daring Folly than if he really thought the Deity blind and inobservant. It is Madness to diffemble when God can't be mocked: Blind Man! cleanse first the inward Thoughts which are all naked and open before that God with whom we bave to do. Else we act like filly Children that thut their own Eyes, and then think that no Body fees them neither.

4. The Hypocrite consults his present Peace as little as his suture Sasety: and he that does neither is certainly a Fool. It is very obvious that he consults not his suture Sasety, since his Judge is Omniscient, and has spoken of Hypocritic as a most aggravated Crime, and of the terrible Punishment that awaits it in the World to come. He highly resents Treachery in Professors, which he ranks among and compares

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Pfalm 94. 7, 8.

with the foulest Abominations. The Portion of Hypocrites † is spoken of as the worst part of Hell. The Abuse of special Privileges will increase our future Misery: || And thou Capernaum which art exalted to Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell. Such pay very dear for their Folly, seek for themselves the hottest Place in Hell, and cast Oil into the Flames they are ever to fry in.

But you wou'd certainly think now, that Men made some present Advantage of Hypocrisie, or they must be Fools indeed, if it be their prefent Misery too. Which yet I dare to say of it, for what Peace can Conscience have in it! Can it possibly refrain from reproaching the Man, and telling him of his Portion to come. There is indeed a Delusion fometimes which is sweet while it lasts, when Men think themselves to be something when they are nothing: but most ill Professors know themselves to be nothing, and so have not so much as the Sweets of a delusive Dream for their Pains. Indeed Sincerity rejoyces in the Testimony of Conscience *: but Hypocrifie has its lash, as an infamous Criminal deserves. It can't but loath it self, and every Day the Man condemns himself, remorfe and guilty Fears torment him, and his Sweets are bitter in his Mouth. This is the Folly of the Hypocrite, he takes the direct Way to perpetual Discontents, Fears and the Loathings of his own Mind. He loses all Comforts of Life, throws away Peace that invaluable Jewel, and has a kind of Hell in his Conscience.

5. And lastly, The Hypocrite is a Fool, for at the best he only proposes to himself to repent hereafter of what he does. Which is but a sorrowful Work at last, and yet the best that he

[†] Matth. 24. 51. | 11. 23. * 2 Cor. 1. 12.

can hope for. That is, he courts one Hour's Sin now, tho' it cost him an Age of Sorrow if he live to be old. This is indeed better than an Eternity of it, but never the less a dear Price for a Minute's Pleasure. Wou'd any Man take a Bee into his Mouth, and be content it shou'd leave its Sting in his Tongue, for a Drop of Honey in its Body? Much less wou'd a wise Man undergo the Pains of Repentance for all the Pleasures of Sin. Grant it then that Wickedness be sweet in the Mouth, yet 'tis like to prove the Gall of Asps within †. Suppose the Poison be vomited up, and we escape with our Life, yet not without dreadful Convulsions and dying Sickness. But of this piece of Folly more may be faid in a more proper Place. Meanwhile let me only add this General Account of a Hypocrite, and I will do no more to paint his egregious Folly.

He pretends to believe that God is, and to worship him, and to live to him. He professes to think Religion a Reality, and to show forth the Life and Power of it: He fays, that God ought to be feared for his Power and Righteoufness, loved for his Beauty and Goodness, praised for his Benefits, trufted in for his Truth and Faithfulness, imitated for his Holiness, and obeyed for his Dominion and Authority: but all this while he no more regards God in his Heart, than if he were only a Name, or a stupid Stock. He is the groffest Piece of Self-contradiction in the whole World. He knows the Judgment of God and yet incurs it, believes the Promises and yet flights'em; puts on a demure Look as from a reverential Awe of God's Presence, and yet laughs at him in his Heart: disdains him when in secret,

⁺ Job 20. 12, 13, 14.

ays of him—he is not, or he can't fee, or he can't strike: takes off his Mask when none but God can fee, and puts it on again when he goes out. Surfeits jollily on the Dainties at home, which he has stollen by long Prayers abroad; and uses the Name of Christ only as the Silver-Smith did Diana's, to maintain his Crast. His Life is Farce and Comedy, but will have a Tragical End. The Play won't last always, the last Ast will be sad and doleful, when God will terribly revenge the Sport Men make of holy Things.

It were easie to say much more of so gross a Subject, but I hasten to Improve it a little for the

Conviction of wicked Professors.

No se. Let it reproach and shame us, as many of us as are not sincere and upright before God. Certainly there is not such a sickly and shameless Thing again in Nature. || My People is foolish, they have not known me, they are sottish Children, and they have no Understanding: they are wife to do Evil, but to do Good they have no knowledge. Can we patiently bear this Charge of Folly? Or like this Image of our selves in the Glass? Have we no resentment of the foul Imputation? Do we not value and stand upon this Privilege and Dignity of our Nature, our Reason and Intellect? Remember this and show your selves Men, O ye Transgressors. We forseit that noble Name else, and may well be accounted despicably tame and stupid.

It is amazing to see Creatures show such Ignorance and Folly, whom God has endowed with the Faculty and Power of Reasoning, and taught them more than the Beasts of the Earth. 'Tis more amazing considering the Thirst after Know-

[|] Jer, 4. 22. * Ifa. 46. 4.

ledge which is natural to Man even from his Orignal State. How eagerly he craves Knowledge, and how proud he is of what he attains unto. Now for fuch a Creature to throw by his Reason, and live as if destitute of common Sense is indeed amazing. The fly Tempter knew how to come at Man, told him of being knowing as God, and of a Tree to be defired to make one Wife, for a tafte of which what did not our first Parents venture! Is this Desire indeed wholly extinguish'd by our Degeneracy through Sin? No. For we see the Pains and Labours undergone by the greatest Men in all Ages to get Knowledge: for this they have confum'd their Time and Strength, deny'd themselves Sleep and Meat, and thought all well repaid and made up, if they have but attained a little deeper Infight into the Wonders of Nature, and the Eternal Reasons of Moral Truths, not to name the more sublime Discoveries of the Gospel. And now what more furprizing, than to behold fuch Creatures betraying the most prodigious Ignorance that can be, to whom yet it is natural to give their Hearts to feek and fearch by Wisdom, concerning all things that are done under Heaven: This is a strange Contradiction, thirsty of Knowledge and yet willingly Ignorant. Ignorance is the more fhameful here, because in Creatures that can't bear to be accounted ignorant. Vain Man wou'd de esteem'd Wise, however stupid his Actions show him; tho' he live as a Colt, and shew no more Reason than the Horse and Mule. And 'tis the more amazing to find this Ignorance betrayed in Things of the last Consequence. That when there is but one Thing truly and eminently to be called Knowledge, the Sinner shou'd take care to appear Ignorant of that! Brute Creatures use their Instinct, 'twere well if Mankind did had to and a suite of larger time to the letter

their Reason: As far as they know what is good for 'em they feek it, and are fatisfy'd in it, and as far as they know what is hurtful to 'em they avoid it; in which respect The dumb As once reprov'd the Madness of the Prophet, and sav'd her Rider, for she turn'd from the Sword of the Angel. Finally, 'Tis amazing that Men enlightned by the Gospel, and taught by Supernatural Revelation, shou'd show no more Knowledge. The Follies of the Heathens were unpardonablet, yet the Darkness brought on Man by the Fall might be pleaded for 'em: But to us the Sun of Righteousness is rifen, the Day-spring from on high bath visited us, to give the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. The Law is a Lamp to our Feet, enlightning the Eyes and making wife the Simple; teaching us to know Wisdom and Instruction, to perceive the Words of Understanding, to give Subtlety to the Simple, and to the Young-man Discretion: And now certainly a Wife Man wou'd hear and increase Learning, and a Man of Understanding wou'd attain unto wise Counsels ||. But is it not truly fad that Men will not come to the Light? Do they not deserve this infamous Brand, and that Folly shou'd be stampt on their Foreheads. The Light shineth in Darkness, and the Darkness comprehended it not.

Let this disgust those Men at their Lusts, who are vain enough to pride in their Intellectual Accomplishments, tho' they have no Morals. But the Misery is, Men can quietly hear the Preacher expose their Folly, when in no other Case, and from no other Mouth, would they bear it. This is not from any Reverence to the Word and Judgment of God, (rather they don't believe or mind it at all as coming from him.)

[†] Ifa. 44. 9, 10. Jer. 10. 8. Rom. 1. 21, 22. | Prov. 1. 5.

but it proceeds from their Partiality to their Lusts: Let them defame us as they will, we can put it up. We have a horrid Instance of it in Amnon, when he inceftuously violated his Sifter Tamar *: As he hal'd her to his lewd Arms, the reprov'd him in Words becoming a pure and wife Virgin; (an Angel would love her virtuous Soul, fairer to a holy Eye than her Face was to the vile Deflowrer) She faid to him-Nay, my Brother, -- do not thou this Folly. And I, whither shall I cause my Shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the Fools in Ifrael. But, Did the luftful Monster attend at all to his own Character? Was he mov'd at the Name She in the Wisdom of God fixed on him? No, He bearkned not to her Voice, but forced on to his Eternal Infamy. Had any Courtier in Ifrael call'd the King's Son a Fool, the proud Prince would have swell'd with Revenge; but he can facrifice his Honour and Reputation to his Luft. But attend, O Sinner! If Sin be thy Ignorance and Shame, why is not thy Indignation rais'd against it? Can you live contented to be fo thought of, pointed at, begg'd for a Natural, the Disdain and Derision of the Wise, -if alas, their Pity to thy Madness and Misery did not over-weigh.

You will say, it may be; nay, but I do know better. We are satisfy'd you do; but so much the worse, the more Fool, the more miserable you! the less to be pity'd, the more impossible to be excus'd, the more audacious God-ward, and the more unnatural to your self! If ye know these things, bappy are ye if ye do them †. If you do them not, who wou'd think you knew'em? If you know'em, who can ever excuse your not doing 'em?

^{* 2} Sam. 13. 12, 13. † John 13. 17.

The Wife and Gracious God tries every way to work on us; now on our Ingenuity, then on our Hope, anon on our Fears, and not seldom on our Shame. This last is one Bridle and Restraint which God hath put on Humane Nature; but it has little Place or Force fave where there are some Remains of Virtue. Modesty is lost with Virtue, and Impudence comes on with Vice, and grows up with it, till Habit and long Custom harden Men, and make 'em shameless. The Reproach of Folly is a sufficient Reason for Shame before all Intelligent Beings; but especially when God charges us with it, what Blushes should it raise, and what inward Confusion should it create! depressing the Spirits, while it disorders and dyes the Face. But are we at all asham'd, or can we blush? The Good God give us a true Sight of Our felves, and we shall. Shame is the proper Expression of Repentance, when Folly is the Charge: to be confounded at the Shamefulness of Sin. It is Wisdom to repent of Folly, and bewail it: * My Wounds stink and are corrupt because of my Foolishness. It is better to befool Our selves now, than to have this the fad Tone in the Place of Despair for ever. Nor is it any Shame to lie abas'd before the Great and Holy God, † O God, thou knowest my Foolishness, and my Sins are not bid from thee. But let the Penitent beware of turning again to Folly !: Senfual Inclinations, like False Lights, will try to lead you again into the old Bogs and Mire. Your past Errors are owing to a deprav'd Heart and fenfual Affections; therefore it will be your Security to watch over and feek the Death of thefe. Attend also the Means of Saving Knowledge, with meek, humble, ho-

^{*} Pfal. 38, 5. + 69. 5. | Prov. 26. 10, 11.

nest Minds, to receive the Truth with Reverence and Love; and pray for Divine Teaching and Illumination: (a) If any Man lack Wisdom let him ask it of God, who giveth it liberally and upbraideth not. He'll not upbraid our past Follies, but make us wise to Salvation: As it pleased him to hear the Toung King of Israel ask for an underfanding Heart, to discern between Good and Bad, and he gave him liberally, (b) exceeding much, and largeness of Heart, even as the Sand which is on the Sea-shore. And what Advice does this Wise King inculcate on us, but to follow his happy Steps in this: My Son, says he, (c) if thou wilt receive my Words, and bide my Commandment with thee; so that thou incline thine Ear unto Wisdom, and apply thy Heart to Understanding: yea, if thou criest after Knowledge, and liftest up thy Voice for Understanding: if thou seekest ber as Silver, and searchest for her as for hid Treasures: then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth Wisdom: out of his Mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding.

And as Wisdom is to be sought of God with Importunity, Vehemence, and Labour, so Ignorance and Folly (which is sometimes judicial from him) is to be as much deprecated. For when Men do not like to retain God in their Knowledge, God often gives 'em over unto a reprobate Mind es is is upor viv * a Mind void of Judgment. He consirms Peoples mad Choice of Delusions †, They have chosen their own Ways, and their Soub delighteth in Abominations, I also will chuse their

Delusions-

Deliver me from all my Transgressions, (prays the Psalmist ||) make me not the reproach of the Foolish.

^{*} Rom. 1. 28. † Ifa. 66. 3, 4. | Pfal. 39. 8.

Suffer me to fay, That the Men of the World, who bave their Portion in this Life, may well point and laugh even at the Children of Light themselves. For however foolish Designers these are, they are wife in the Execution and compaffing of their Project. They are resolv'd on their End, they contrive, they labour, they are indefatigable: They deny themselves in many Points. they shew Foresight and Cunning, they let slip no Opportunity, but are ready, upon every Advantage that offers, to make the most of it. You may fee their Cares on their Brows, as they pass along the Streets, and they turn every Stone: In those respects they are wife in their Generation. Let their Example shame us, and the more, by how much the Merchandise of Wisdom is better than that of Silver, or than the Gain of fine Gold. Is it not to our just Reproach, that we shou'd set less by Our End, than they by Theirs? And yet (as the Apostle fays in a like Case) they aim only at Corruptible Things (which is their egregious Folly) but we at Incorruptible. We propose nobly, let us greatly profecute it: It is well worthy of our utmost Care, and will abundantly pay for all our Labours: It honours us likewise; for this approves it self to the Reafon and Conscience of every Man to be compleat, finish'd, consummate Wildom.

much

II. The next Observation is, That among Vifible Profesfors there are many Infincere and Unfound. And five were foolish. Five out of Ten: And wou'd to God there were even this equal Division, and that every other Man among us were an upright Christian! Alas, it is far otherwife; and but One of Many will be found among the Wife. It is a Matter of forrowful Observation, That the World lieth in Wickedness; nor

nor is it the Pagan and Mahometan World only, but the Christian and Reformed likewise; nor only the Prophane Part of Christians neither, who make little Pretence to any thing but the Name; but even among them that make a credible and zealous Profession.

Mens Lives give sufficient Ground for this Charge; By their Works ye shall know them. A Barren Tree may have Leaves, as a Hypocrite a Face of Devotion. It was so in Ancient Times, especially was it the leven of the Pharisees, whose Profession was goodly, but their Hearts salse and corrupt; who talk'd much of Religion abroad, but practis'd nothing of it in secret: This Leven spreads and taints too many every where. Then again, there is the Profane Christian, who is an open Contradiction to his Name; throws off the very Form of Godliness, and will be a Rake and Libertine in spite

A Wicked Professor, whether bare-sac'd so, or under Disguise, has only this at last to brag of, That he has not renounc'd his Baptism in so many Words, explicitly and formally. It is no Thanks to such that they are Christians; (i. e. called so:) Their Parents put that Sacred Name on them in their Infancy, and they retain it for Custom-sake, or in Deference to Them, or it may be they have never thought why

themselves.

of his Baptism.

There is a double Wonder in this Management, 1. Why the Wicked Man makes any Profession at all: And, 2. Why doing that he does no more, and lives

not up to his Profession?

I. Why do Wicked Men make any Profession at all? Seeing they hate the Holiness of the Gospel, why do they seem to like it, and bind themselves to conform to it? Why do they so
much

much as take a Lump, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom? One wou'd think they should openly renounce him and declare against him. But there are several Things that tempt, or compel, or hearten Wicked People to make a Profession of Christi-

anity.

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Many are tempted by one or other Worldly Interest. It is possible that Reputation may be serv'd by it. It is worn as a Dress, because fashionable and creditable in the Places where we live, and therefore is it so soon chang'd by many if it grow into Difrepute. Of Old the Praise of Men, and Greetings in the Market, had a great Hand in, and was at the bottom of, some Mens Devotion and Zeal. Sometimes it brings Worldly Profit with it, and then a Shew of Godline's shall be made because it is so much Gain. There is no Sect of Religion but some lift into it meerly for their Secular Advantage. Some moreover out of Esteem of, and to serve a particular Party, and some to please those whom they depend on.

Sometimes Men have such a Conviction, that Christianity is the Wisdom of God, that their Consciences compel them to a Form of it. We are not commonly so bold neither, and so harden'd, as to be able to cast off all Religion, and despise the very Name of Christ. The Thought of this would fill many a very Wicked Man with Horror: He must after a fort consult his own Peace; and to keep all easy within make a Profession at least. A Man that considers how Holy the Laws and Doctrines of Christ are, and his Life and Miracles in Consistency of 'em, may be forc'd to consess with them *, This is that Prophet. Sometimes the Word finds out a Man's

^{*} John 6. 15.

Sins, and as the Apostle speaks + convinces, judges him, und makes manifest the Secrets of his Heart, (as if the Preacher knew all his fecret Thoughts and Deeds, and fet himself to take the Picture of his Soul, and expose his Privacies:) This may compel him to fall down and worship, and joyn himself to those in whom of a Truth he finds God to be. But then it may be he goes no further: Conscience is a little eas'd, the Meridian Light not altogether neglected or resisted; he has done fomething, and promifes to do more in Time, and so contents himself.

Finally, Presumptuous Hopes, seeming Refolutions, and confident Promises, do hearten and embolden Men even to renew their Bond and Oath of Fidelity to Christ. One presumes his Heart is right; another Sanguine Sinner doubts not but his will be fo, imagines great Things of his own Strength, and intends and refolves to take up in good time; daring, it may be, to engage for himself, That he shall not be fuch a Fool or a Devil, but one Day or other he shall think of his Interest and Duty, and

live religiously.

2. And now we shall the less wonder, That so many do no more than make a Profession. What is thus gone about, is never likely to be gone thro' with: When the By-end is answer'd. no wonder if the Profane Heart make a full Stand: Or no wonder if God blows upon the Pride and Presumption of Men, and lets them fuffer for their Vanity; for they undertake without an humble Dependance on Him, or imploring of his Grace, and it cannot be thought but that He will refift and rebuke them.

But moreover, there are many and great Hindrances both from within and without. Within is latent Infidelity. The Principle of Evanglical Obedience is wanting, even a fixed fleady Belief, The Evidence of Things not seen, the Subfrance of Things hoped for: There are secret Doubts of their Reality, or vain Hopes of an Abatement from the Rigour of the Word.

Sloth also has a great hand in the false Profession of Religion. There is an Indulgence to Carnal Ease: The Flesh cries—yet a little Sleep and folding of the Arms. There is both a natural and contracted Listlesness to any Pains and Labour in Spiritual Duties: The Corruption within us shows it self, like some Diseases in the Body, which make People hate to stir, it is a kind of Death to em to walk or work. It is certain that Diligence and Labour are necessary in the Christian Life: The idle lazy Person will never get to Heaven: We have a Race to run, Difficulties to surmount, Dangers to get thro, Battels to sight, and Enemies to conquer; All this calls for Vigor and Spirit.

Finally, There is a wicked and perverse Aversion in Men to the Holiness of the Gospel. A
rooted Enmity, which is a Root of Bitterness,
which the Apostle both charges and laments ||,
The carnal Mind is Enmity against God; for it is not
subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.
We need not scarce to be told of this, we feel so
much of it Our selves; and we see in Little Children a Dis-relish of Divine Truths before they
know why. It is a kind of Natural Antipathy,
and is not ordinarily conquer'd as we grow up,
because not striven against, but it is strengthen'd
by an early Indulgence: for a Sensual Educa-

tion wolently fixes it, Carnality growing up with us. So that when People come to understand the Calls of the Word, they find themselves preposses with a strong Reluctance against the Things proposed and required. Nor is this any Exception that the Mind and Reason have against them, for then Reason might answer and remove the Objections; but it is an unreasonable Contrariety and Opposition of the Heart; so that let the convinced Mind and Conscience rebuke and urge the Will and Affections, they answer at last—We can't comply, confessing Impotence, Loathing, and a mad Bent of Heart against the Way of Salvation by

the Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed the Corruption in Us is averse both to the Change in Regeneration, and to a Justification by Another's Righteoufness: It is made up of Impurity and Pride. This is a strange thing, that we should not like an Inherent Principle of Righteoufness in us, nor the Imputed Righteousness of the Saviour neither. But certainly the Reason is, Because the last can't be had but together with the first. It is highly probable that it wou'd please Men well enough if they might have one without the other; but if there must be an Inherent Principle of Holiness, a New Heart, Sanctify'd Affections, and an Obedient Life, they are for taking that to be their Righteousness, * whereby they go; about to establish a Righteousness of their own, not submitting to the Righteousness of God. Thus there is that within us which lufts against the Christian Life.

Nor are there wanting Temptations from without, which the Devil is ready at hand to improve, and our own Hearts too ready to be taken with. The World is one great Snare, even the most

^{*} Rom. 10.3.

innocent Enjoyments of it, and the most defirable Circumstances in it, as Luft abuses them. and as Saran uses 'em; as he cou'd even the Things of Paradice, to make Occasions of Sin and Mischief of them. Men must wrestle against the Importunities of Flesh and Blood. and against the Power and Policy of Hell; against the Cravings of a vitiated Nature fomented by the World and the Devil. Mens Lufts put in for their own Life, and plead a long Acquaintance and Love, and Pleasures not yet tasted. The World paints or gilds its Face, and comes out to meet us, with much fair Speeches and Flatteries it tells us of Gains, and Glories, and Gardens of Effeminacy. The Devil draws the Landskip with a false Colour and Varnish, gives 'em a Light and Gloss that does no ways belong to 'em, and all together is a mighty Endeavour against Religion, meeting with a Heart naturally at Enmity with it. This must needs affist and strengthen the inward Aversarion. The World sensualizes Mens Minds by its Examples, Customs, and Solicitations, or it derides and perfecutes Men out of Sobriety and Virtue. The Adversary, the Devil, is busy, and as he has his Wiles to take Men, so has he a Lion's Strength to keep the Prey. It is true, he can't compel Men to Irreligion, but he powerfully and unweariedly importunes, perswades, lays Baits, and deceives. The chief and general Collusion is this, On the one hand he shows this World, and the Things of Sense, in a Glory that they have not; and on the other hand, he tries to obscure the bright Ways of God, by raising Milts about them, and giving em a hideous Aspect, as if altogether Pain and Misery. The Tempter casts himself into all Shapes, and turns every Stone.

Our Mercies are made Obstacles to a Religious Life. Nothing is so good but the subtle Enemy tries to pervert it; and as the Bee fucks Honey from poisonous Flowers, so on the contrary, wou'd he make us find our Bane in the fairest and goodlieft common Gifts of God. + How bard is it for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God! Wife Agur knew the Danger, | lest I be full and deny thee! Distracting Cares increase with them, Business engrosses the Man, his Ventures and Farms keep him from his Clofet and the Church, or they intrude thither and carry away his Mind. Christ was cheap * to the Young-Man who had great Possessions, and the Supper was left by them that were bidden for a Piece of Ground, or a Yoke or two of Oxen.

Or, Riches purchase us Pleasures to surfeit on, Soul, thou hast Goods laid up—— take thy Ease, eat drink and be merry. The plentiful Provision is made the Fuel of Lust, to pamper the Appetite, and gratify the Passions. Their Table becomes a Snare before them, and that which should

bave been for their Welfare becomes a Trap.

Thro' our Corruption we turn our Intellectual Accomplishments to our Spiritual Hurt: If they puff up and make Men vain and giddy, they do but put 'em farther from Grace. So Dignity and Power do often elate Men, and they lose the Reverence they owe to God, and the Juffice and Mercy they owe to Man. Health is also abused to make Men secure, and put off Repentance. Bodily Beauty is the Occasion often of a great deal of Vanity, Pride, and Lewdness: The Body is dress'd at the Soul's Cost and Neglect. Our lov'd Relations also are made our Temptations; as he in the Para-

[†] Matth. 19. 23. | Prov. 30-9. *Luke 18, 23, 24. 14. 19.

ble pleads in his own Excuse, I have married a Wife, and cannot come. Children are commonly our Idols: as we sometimes see a Hen so busy for one little Chicken, that every thing is neglected for the Care of it alone: But what is innocent and pretty here, is very faulty and fatal in us. There is not one Mercy we enjoy but it may prove a Hindrance of Holiness thro our Corruption.

And so may our Afflictions too. There is a great Hazard of undue Resentments; Impatience, Fretfulness, and Sullenness; of being angry at Heaven, or enraged at Men. Our Medicine is turn'd into Poison, and Corruption is strengthen'd by that which should mortify it.

These are some of the Evil Causes and Reafons, why, among so many Professors, so few are fincere. And let us take it up for a Lamentation that there are so few! That under a general Mask of Religion, the Great God, and our Glorious Redeemer, have no more real Honour and Service! nay, so much Dishonour and Injury done Him by his Own! What unaccountable Creatures are We! An Heathen or Atheist are not so odd a Sight: Their Course agrees to their Blindness or Perverseness but, a Wicked Professor is such a Mixture of Opposites, that the like is no where to be found: He breaths hot and cold at once, is at War with Himself, and ever giving Himself the Lie: His Faith continually condemns his Life, and his Life as much reproaches his Faith: Christ is in his Face and Mouth, Belial in his Heart and Life; his Face is Angelical, but his Foot Cloven. This is the Mystery of a Professor's Iniquity.

But know it, such a Profession will be the Fire in our Consciences another Day, and make

us feem the more Devils to our selves for having appear'd Saint-like once. The Hypocrite's Conscience will be the most enrag'd, because his real Advantages, and his seign'd Pretences and Vows, have heightned his Guilt unspeakably. Let me therefore pass to the Third Observation, which is,

III. That a Profession, without Grace in the Heart, governing the Life, is of no Value or Significancy. They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oil with them. What then, I pray, did their Lamps signify? Of what Use and Benefit were they? Truly none. No more is a bare Profession of Religion; it is an empty

Lamp, and won't give any Light.

Grace within is the principal and necessary Thing; of which I cannot speak those magnificent Things that are its due. It is the Principle of all Holiness, the Seeds of Life and Glory fown in us by the Spirit of God. It is the Earnest and Security to us of the Everlasting Love of the Bleffed God, His Delight in us, and our feeing His Face for evermore. It is the Soul's Life: You bath be quickened who were dead. It is the Soul's Light: Te were sometimes Darknefs. It is the Image of the Holy One restored in us; our partaking of a Divine Nature. It is the Spirit of God dwelling in us, the Evidence of our Adoption, our Transformation into the Likeness of God, our Translation to the Borders of Heaven, and the Seal and Pledge, as well as indispensable Condition, of our Reception into it. It is the One Thing needful, the Root, Spring, and Fountain of all acceptable Obedience. For the we could speak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, and understood all the Doctrines and Mysteries of Christianity, and

cou'd boast of mighty Charities to the Poor, yet if this Heavenly Principle were wanting, we are

nothing.

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This is but a little Part of its just Encomium: And yet how great is the least Part of this Character? What Glorious Things are to be spoken of thee, O thou inconceivable Gift of God! What a Treasure have we in Thee! How rich in this Possession! but poor, and destitute, and perish-

ing without it.

But its Glory is in the Life. There is a Newness of Life from a new Nature: Upon new Principles and Inclinations, and new Power and Strength, will follow a new Course and Converse. He that is born of God doth not commit Sin t. There is a Holy Disposition and Ability from God given to us of living Holily. The Fountain is sweet, and the Streams can't be bitter |. A good Heart and a good Life go together. Every particular Grace of the Spirit looks to Practice. There is the Work of Faith, and the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope; Repentance has its meet Fruits, and the Fear of the Lord is to bate Evil and to perfect Holiness (a). And we may infallibly conclude concerning the Nature of Grace in general, from the common Property of all particular Graces. In a Word, It is from hence that we have Peace, our Neighbours Profit, and God Glory from the Exercise of Grace. I will show thee my Faith by my Works. This is an Evidence to Our felves and to Others; Our Affurance and Their Edification depends thereon; and God has Glory, who never defign'd his Gifts and Graces to be pent up and bury'd within our Breaft.

^{† 1} John 3. 9. | Jam. 3. 10, 11, 13. (a) Jam. 2. 18.

2 Theff. 1. 3. Matth. 3. 8. 2 Cor. 7. 1.

Else the End of a Profession is lost; it is the Form without the Power of Religion, by which a Man is condemned in Himself, is offensive to God, and ridiculous to Men. Men have no way to judge of Us, but by our outward Behaviour; if that is not as becomes the Gospel, they must needs deride our demure Looks and solemn Declarations; they must needs despise us as rotten Hypocrites. And there is nothing more scandalous among Men, than to be look'd upon as Men of no Faith, Truth, Honesty, Conscience; yet the Professor must seem all this to them that behold his Wicked Life.

Three Things I have to charge upon a Profession, where the Heart is void of Grace, and the Life wicked. 1. It is a Mockery of God and Man. It puts upon the Ignorance of Men, and laughs at the Omniscience of God. Men pray for Blessings which they don't heartily desire, and come to hear with Purposes not to practice. This is altogether to trisle, and mock Christ and his Ministers, and our Fellow-Worshipers; and any Superior on Earth wou'd refent it as an high Indignity to be so play'd upon.

2. The Profession of a Graceless Man is a Lie. Satan fills his Heart to lie to God and out-brazen Men. There are multiply'd Promises and Vows often repeated, never perform'd. He both works Abomination and maketh a Lie: The Character equally of an open scandalous Sinner or a close Hypocrite; only the last doubles the Lie by

Saying be bas Fellow (bip with God *.

Lastly, A Profession without Gracious Living is a Contradiction to it self. It is a credible retracting and annulling it. † They profess that they

¹ John 1. 6. † Titus 1. 16.

know God, but in Works they deny him. Which is a Denial of Him in some respects worse than if it were in Words, inasmuch as it looks more in earnest, and is more easily credited. It tempts Others to suspect his pretended Belief, which were a small thing and righteous, if it did not tempt them to blaspheme and reject the Faith it self.

The Day is coming when God will judge the Secrets of Men, and bring every Work into Judgment, in which Day the Ungodly shall not stand, and the Righteous scarcely be saved : many that are first (in their own Conceit, or in the Opinion of Others) shall be last, and the last shall be first: (Holy Souls that pass hid and silently thro' the World, without Oftentation or Noise, shall stand in the first Ranks of Saints.) O Christian. wou'd you be found nothing in that Day! Will thy Name fave thee? or, Will you not wish that Name had never been worn, when it shall rife in Judgment against you? Is there no Oil in that fair Lamp? Shall thy Blaze go out in a Stink? and all thy Noise of thy Regards to Christ be found a Lie? Shall a Goat's Heart, or a Dog's and a Wolf's be found under this meek Face and foft Wool? How furpriz'd may we all be to fee thee brought forth in Chains among the Enemies of Christ, and among the basest of 'em too, among the Traytors whom Judas shall head, to be ignominiously executed. Hypocrites are part of the Black-Guard that follow Him, having fold his Saviour, their End is like to be Tragical. Infamous and Despairing like His, and they shou'd have His Halter before Their Eyes.

O Christian, perswade thy self thou hearest thy Saviour saying to thee as he did to that false Disciple ||, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of

Man with a Kis? So do thy treacherous Sins! I do you no wrong by the Comparison, tis the best Instance I cou'd chuse to reach the Conscience of the hardiest; of Any but a very Judas; and they are, tho' the mildest Words that were ever spoken on fuch an Occasion, yet the most pungent too. Betravest-art thou capable of base Treachery and foul Perfidiousness? Betrayest Thou-my Disciple, my Follower, who hast been a Witness of my Holy Life and Doctrine, and even a Preacher of Me to Others? Can one of thy Knowledge, in thy Relation to me, after such a Profession of me, and so many Personal Favours done thee, conceive Treason against me? Betrayest thou the Son of Man-What! thy Lord and Master, thy God and Saviour! And with a Kis! In the worst manner that can be? Why camest thou not as an open Enemy, with a Staff or Spear in thy Hand: This Difguise and Shew of Duty makes thy Sin the greater and more deteftable. Our Lord feems to upbraid him as much with the fuper-added Hypocrify, as with the Treason it self: And so he will our Wickedness another Day, which we commit under a specious Colour of a dutiful Respect and Subjection; we say Hail Master, while we crucify him afresh: We are Judas's Accomplices in every fuch Action. Don't fcorn the Charge nor be angry at it; but let it humble and give thee Remorfe. Good Peter was grieved when his Love to his Saviour was but question'd *, let it shame and grieve us that we have so many Sins which arraign us as his Betrayers and mortal Enemies.

I find no end of declaiming against Hypocrify: it is the deceitful kisses of an Enemy t, like

^{*} John 21. 17. † Prov. 27. 6.

Foab to Amasa, it puts on the kindest Look, and speaks nothing but Respect and Love, but there is a Sword in the Hand, and Murder in the Heart. It is the Top of Villany |, with a fawning Cringe and Words of Worship to bear Malice within. It is decry'd by Man (a), and referred by God (b). as the worst of Injuries; and as our Profession is for Eminency, so is Falfness in it for Scandal. God has said to us as Abimelech once to Abraham. Swear unto me here by God, that thou wilt not deal fallely with me; and we have fworn: but fuppose now that we never intended to perform, or at least have never done it, then hear the Judgment of God against us: They are an Assembly of treacherous Men, they bend their Tongue like a Bow for Lies, through Deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. Shall I not visit for these things, Saith the Lord, shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? Well may it provoke the holy Indignation of God, for it is no better than the Devil in disguise, Satan transformed into an Angel of Light, it impudently looks God in the Face as if he were an Idol: the Hands are wash'd clean, but the Soul is foul; * like unto whited Sepulchers (as is the Elegant Similitude in the Gospel) which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead Mens Bones and of all Uncleannels. The adorned Place looks diffinguish'd from common Ground, but is at last a Grave full of Filth. Bi-(hop Hall's Character of him is severe but just : He is the Stranger's Saint, the Neighbour's ' Disease, the Blot of Goodness, a rotten Stick that shines in the dark, an ill-temper'd Candle with a great Snuff that smells ill as it goes.

^{||} Isa. 32. 6. (a) Pfalm 55. 11,—14. Pfalm 120, 2, 3, 4. (b) Ezek. 33. 31. Jer. 9. 3, 6, 9. Matth. 24. 51. Matth. 23. 25, 26, 27.

out. The Hypocrite is conscious to his own Deformity, as some paint because they see themselves ugly in the Glass: the Devil before him us'd to steal a Vail of Light, which his Servant borrows, and is just fuch a Saint as he an Angel; being indebted to Hell for his Saint Light when he appears most heavenly. Finally, the foolish Creature imprecates dire Vengeance against himfelf: by his folemn Covenanting to be the Servant of Christ he has implicitly call'd for the Curses of God upon his own Head, if he is false. He has in effect faid, Let my Saviour do so to me and more also if I prove Perfidious: let me suffer as a Traitor and die his merited death: let God take away my Part, out of the Book of Life, and out of the Holy City; so we imprecate, and God has written it down and fealed it. † A Hypocrite shall not come before him. || The Hypocrites in Heart heap up Wrath: they die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.

And now let such behold themselves: let us also look on one another as we sit here worshiping: a shame on the salse Heart! For how grave we all look this Moment! Attentive to the Word of Christ, sitting as his People, bowing at his Altar and to his Name! Who'd think there cou'd be any traiterous Thought in any one of us! Well, give me a professed Insidel, that wars fairly, before any sly Assassine, that stabs at the Name of Christ while he crouches at his

Feet to Worship.

Let all that has been said be improved as a loud Call to Sincerity. It lies upon us to live up to all the shew we make of a cordial chosen Subjection to Christ. I was also upright before him and kept my self from mine Iniquity.

t Job 13.6. | 36. 13, 14.

Let us know the Treachery and Wickedness of our own Hearts: What a depth of Sin there is within us, how false our good Purposes generally are, how easily our pious Resolutions are broken and forgotten, how weak our Strength is; that Grace is not at our Command, and that without it we cannot fland. Let us confider our Enemy too: if the Devil can difgrace you he will: it is a visible Victory when a Disciple falls, therefore he desired to sift Peter, and to throw David, where Faith had once vanquish'd his Image. But above all, Implore the Presence, Influence and keeping of God. Cast thy self on his Allsufficient Grace. Seek bis Face evermore, even daily renewed Supplies of the Spirit: Go empty and thirsty to the Fountain, of whose Fulness you may receive; bring enlarged Desires instead of fo many Vessels to fill, bring not a few (as the Prophet directed the poor Widow) and God will pour out his Spirit, and the Oil shall not stay till there be not a Vessel remaining to fill: this shall continually feed your Lamp, and your Lamp shall brighten your Way, and your Path shall be like the shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.

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IV. The last Observation is, That wise and holy Persons will be solicitous for the continual Supplies of the Spirit, for their growth in Grace and Perseverance in the Ways of God. Ver. 4th. But the wife took Qil in their Veffels with their Lamps. The foolish Professor cares for no more than a present Appearance and Blaze, the wife Christian makes Provision for a future Supply through all the Changes and Temptations of Life, to have Grace actually ready to use upon all Occasions. casions,

1. It is supposed here to be the Property of true Grace to defire Growth and Perseverance. The Holy Scripture, which is the unerring Truth of God, must instruct us in the Nature and Properties of Grace. The Holy Ghoft can best describe his own Work: He testifies of his own, and we ought to receive his Testimony. In his inspired Word he describes a good Man by this, that he is born of incorruptible Seed, which liveth and abideth for ever *; this is but agreeable to the Nature of the Immutable and Incorruptible God. The good Man is compared to a Tree planted by the Rivers of Waters, that bringeth forth his Fruit in his feafon, his Leaf also shall not wither (a): He is well water'd and ever flourishing, and spreading out his Roots by the River (the never-failing Influences of the Spirit of God flowing over to him) he shall not see when heat cometh, his Leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of Drought, neither shall cease from yielding Fruit (b). So again Ezekiel (c) elegantly illustrates the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit by the Vision of the boly Waters and their Vertue : they are represented to, Thue from under the Threshold of the House of God, and make a deep and large River, on the Bank of which are mamy Trees (Believers growing up under the Ordinances of the Gospel) whose Leaf ('tis said') shall not fade, neither shall the Fruit thereof be confumed; it shall bring forth new Fruit according to its Months, because their Waters issued out of the Sanctuary. many fuch Descriptions and Promises * are given us by the Unchangeable God of Love and Mercy! I will only point to that one Text more †; The Path of the Just is as the shiring Light that shi-

^{* 1} Pet. 1. 23. 1 John 3.9. (a) Pfalm 1.3. (b) Jer. 17.8. (c) 47 Chap. * Ifa. 40. 31. 42. 3. Phil. 1.6. † Prov. 4. 28.

neth more and more unto the perfect Day. The Asfertion is very plain here, and the Allusion to illustrate it is very fine. As the Day breaks by little and little, and the Sun rises and runs on to high Noon; so is the Beginning and Progress of a Saint's holy Walk till he arrive at Heaven. As that runs his Course, so will the Regenerate Man the Race before him. I don't mean with that Exactness, without the least stop or deviation; for too often for a time the best of Men are at a stay, or under sensible decays; by Storms of Temptation are driven backward, and lose Ground: but this is Præternatural and a Force done to the Spirit of Grace by relucting Lust in us; and tho' under fuch Damps a gracious Man may be ready to give all over for gone, and fay he has no Grace nor ever had any; yet it lives in him even then and preferves him: as there may be Fire rak'd up and buried under a Heap of Ashes, so as neither to give any sensible Heat or Light: nor can it be faid exactly how long together a good Man may be thus, even the Man after God's own heart, (which Instance | may well make us fear and tremble): but this we know, he shall revive, recover, and shine again: As the Sun is not lost nor quench'd under the Cloud that obscures it, let the Weather be dark for many Days together; it finally breaks and scarters the thick Cloud, and is feen as bright and fwift again as ever before.

2. The Growth and Perseverance of Grace in us is from the renewed Supplies (a) of the Spirit of God. These flow to us from his Personal Indwelling (b), and through these alone we grow and persevere in Holiness. He quickens, and he

^{|| 2} Sam. 12. Chap. (a) Phil. 4. 19. 1(b) Rome 8. 9. 1 Cor. 3, 16.

Influences we shou'd soon wither away: as the Branch cannot bear Fruit of it self, except it abide in the Vine, no more can we but by continual Influence communicated to us from Christ. Every new Degree and Measure of Grace is received from the same Hand that first put the Principle of it in the Soul. The Revival of Grace from its Languishments and Decays, is from the Holy Ghost the first Author and Giver of it: be strengthens the things which remain, that are ready to die. Nay, there is not the least Act or Exercise of Goodness at any time performed by us, but it is God who enables us. He divideth to every Man as he willeth, and worketh both to will and to do of his own good Pleasure. And if an Apostle is made to excel, and exceed in Labours, yet not I, says he, but Christ dwelling in me.

This then is the Saint's Safety and Preservation: He is anointed with fresh Oil, and the anointing which he has received abideth in him *. Grace wou'd soon die if the same Goodness and Power that first gave it did not uphold it; and it wou'd never increase if of the same Fulness there were not new Communications as need is. He blows upon the Garden that the Spices thereof may flow out: He strengthens with might by his Spirit in the Inner Man, and so we are rooted and grounded in all

Goodness †.

3. Therefore a wise and gracious Saint will be very solicitous for the renewed Supplies of the Spirit; that his inner Man may be renewed day by day, that as he has received how he ought to walk and to please God, so he may abound more and more ||. Every good Man feels himself destitute, and sees

^{*} Psalm 92. 10. 1 Jo. 2. 27. † Eph. 3. 16, 17. || 2 Cor. 4. 16. 1 Thess. 4. 1.

a Fulne s and Sufficiency in God. He is a Stranger to the Grace of God that is not convinced of and affected with his own Weakness and Impotency. St. Paul felt and bewailed it in himfelf (a): and we must all confess with him, that as often as we have been enabled to do good, fo often we have felt our felves carried beyond our felves; at some other times we can no more do the same thing than remove a Mountain. And certainly this melancholy Sense of a Disability to the Things that are Holy and Good, must needs cause a good Man to look out for some Foreign Help. He is wretched in himself and groans for Deliverance from the Law of Sin which is in his Members; and he goes to God for it in a full Affurance of his Power and Will, his Ability and his Readiness: In the Lord Febovah is everlasting Strength. All created Beings are as little felf-fufficient as we, and as much dependent on the first Cause of all Things: But the Infinite God is (b) sufficient both for us and them, whether to find our Happiness in hereafter, or to rely on for Protection and Strength at present. This every good Man firmly believes, and finds his Soul lifted to God: his Prayer this - O God of my strength, send forth thy Light and thy Truth, let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy Hill and to thy Tabernacles. Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I: Cause me to hear thy Loving-kindness, for in thee do I trust; cause me to know the way wherein I shou'd go, for I lift up my Soul unto thee. Teach me to do thy Will, for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good, lead me into the Land of Uprightness. All my Springs are in thee! He expostulates the Case with himself, O my Soul, where else canst thou be safe, whence else replenished! Is there not a necessity for thy

⁽a) Rom. 7. 18, 19. (b) 2 Cor. 3.5.

repairing hither? Naked and feeble as thou art in thy self, and every thing about thee destitute and empty as thou! How will thy own Feet or these slender Reeds sink under thy Weight! Ought I not to stay my self on the Rock of Ages! And while I do so, will it not pour me out Water and Oil both? Shou'd I not ask of him living Water, and open my Mouth wide for him to fill? Shou'd I not implore him to conduct me in his Righteousness, fill me with his Spirit, take me under his Wing, cover me with his Feathers, nay, and keep me as the Apple of his Eye; to guide by his Counsel and bring me safe to Glory!

This is the Solicitude of every Child of God, and it arises from a deep Sense of his own Poverty and Helplesness, and the Riches of the Divine Being, who when he appeared to Abraham said to him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect. And they that know the Worth of Grace, or apprehend their own Danger if it be with-held, or are Emulous of the brightest Seat in Glory, will shew this anxious

Care to increase in Grace.

r. Good Men do so, because they know the Worth, and what Price to put on the Grace of God; by a happy Conviction of its Necessity and Experience of its Nature and Effects. God has given them of his Grace, and it has wrought a wonderful Change in 'em; they have found themselves New Men, quite other and happier than what they were before; their State and Frames alter'd wonderfully for the better. They have the Joys of the restored Blind Man and Cripple both *: they have changed Darkness for Light, and a diseas'd State for Health, and an unquiet Conscience for Peace and Joy. They restect with extreme Thankfulness on what they

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^{*} John 9. 7. Acts 3. 8.

were once, † but are washed, sanctified, justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And now the renewed Soul beholds himself with Complacency, loves his own Form and Comliness, rejoyces in his Sasety, and is full of Praises for all the great Things which God has done for him; who forgiveth all thine Iniquities, who healeth all thy Diseases, who redeemeth thy Life from Destruction—. Thus Grace is to him that has it of inestimable Price, his Treasure and his very Life, and he esteems it a sufficient Portion.

And can he ever think he has enough of this good Part, this best of Bleffings? Can he ever cease to crave for more? Is this agreeable to the common Sense of Mankind in what they apprehend to be their principal Good, whereon their Hearts are fet and wherein they hope to find their Happiness? Has the Miser ever enough flore of Riches? Is he not yet hard at work every Day to add to the mighty Heap? Has the fenfual Man ever his Fill of Pleasure? The Drunkard of Wine? When he awakes will he not feek it yet again? Has the Ambitious Courtier ever the wish'd Top of Honour? He desires yet one step higher, and some more Fame; and tho' he be already Sovereign of Mighty Kingdoms, yet he often thirsts after new Dominions. Men think highly of these Things, and are insatiable in their Defires of 'em; they cry Give, Give: they deyour all the full Ears and fat Kine, and look with eager Eyes after more. This were indeed proper if the Object of their Desires were the Supreme and Infinite Good, for no degree of Defire can reach that: and therefore does the good Man thirst so after Grace, the invaluable Thing, which all the Things thou canst desire are not to be

[†] Rom. 7.9. 1 Cor. 6. 11.

compared with. Here can be no Excess, nay Posfession raises the Desire, our Wishes bear no Proportion to the Thing, which is beyond our Comprehension, and never enter'd into the Heart of Man

to conceive of.

2. Good Men apprehend the Danger and Hazard they are in of falling, if not kept by the Grace of God, and the dreadful Confequents thereof. The Child of God is aware of the Treachery of his own Heart, and the Diligence, Strength, Number and Subtlety of his Enemies: he knows well that a great deal of Grace is little enough to resist these, that he need be strong in the Lord, and must expect many Shocks and hard Blows tho' he come off Conqueror. He has felt the difficulty of standing to Day, and knows not what Trials and Temptations may befet him to Morrow, and has heretofore felt the fore Pains of the Wounds which Sin gives, He knows that the same Difficulties and Enemies peffer the Road all the Way to Heaven, and the nigher we get to it the more inrag'd will the envious Fiends be. On all these Accounts he is fensible that he can't have too much Grace; he is fearful of falling and dare not be high-minded; for he knows his Duty and Dangers cannot be furmounted by humane Force, having Principalities and Powers of Darkness to cope with. He had need have the Spirit of Christ who is to follow him into the Wilderness, and meet the same Tempter there which he foil'd and beat. Thou art my strong Tower from the Enemy - I will trust in the Covert of thy Wings. The good Man knows also that outward Trials do abide him in the Flesh, that Tribulations lie in the Way to Heaven, which will try his Faith and Love; Humility, Refignation and Patience, nay, it may be Name and Riches, Relatives and Life it felf may be E0193called

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called for; and can he ever lay in sufficiently against that Day? Suppose I have not more Grace then to exercise, than I am sensible of now, shall I be able to stand? O what need then to make the Disciples Prayer, Lord, increase our Faith! Finally, the dark Hour of Death is before the Child of God, when Flesh and Heart must fail, and when we must look to have our Enemies busie, our Spirits low, and an untrodden Vale to pass, we know not how gloomy and full of Horror; only this we know that we are not like to be too strong for that last Combat or Struggle of Nature; it will be well if we can die with just Hopes over-weighing our Doubts and Fears, but much better if we might Rejoycing and Triumphing in a full Assurance of Faith, as they that know that their Redeemer lives and that they are going to him. The more Grace we now lay in, the more may we hope to die thus; and Peace in that Hour will pay for all the Pains we can take for it.

3. The good Man craves Increase of Grace, because so much shall the Brightness of his Crown and the weight of his Reward be increased for ever. The more Grace the more Glory: so is the Reward proportion'd and adjusted ||: so that we cannot aspire at a high Seat in Glory and be content with low Attainments in Grace. He has but poor Thoughts of the Heavenly World who does not crave to be distinguish'd there: to be as near my Saviour, and as like him, and hold the first Place in his Favour that is possible for me to attain; to advance near even to the Thrones of Apostles, who followed him in the Regeneration and had the Promise of an Ex-

[|] Matth. 19. 28. 25. 21, 23. Rev. 7. 14, 15. * Matth.

altation near his own Person: or, to come next to the Heroick Martyrs, who walk in an exceeding Brightness + of Glory, for they are worthy. This Ambition becomes a Christian; there's no Disciple but prefers St. John's Place, who lay in the Bosom of Jesus: but they that expect the brightest Glories must excel and outshine in Grace now: therefore our Lord ask'd the aspiring Brethren !. Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I hall drink of, and to be beptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with? For such is such a Dignity prepared by the Father. St. Paul therefore so sought it and obtained (a); That I may know him, fays he, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable to his Death ! And then he declares what a Thirst he had after more Degrees of Holiness, inflam'd from the Hopes of the greater Glory: If by any means, fays he, I might attain to the Resurrection of the dead, (i. e. to a like state of Grace and Holiness) -This one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Fesus. He tells us moreover that as many as are perfect will be thus minded; To that if we have any Measure of Grace at all, it will thus how it felf in aspiring after more. Either Thought is intolerable to a holy Soul, whether quite to miss of Heaven, or to fore-go a great deal of it. He that from a Prefumption that he has some Grace can be content to fit down and fay, Now all is well, I hope I have enough to get to Heaven with, and am careful no further, may e'en satisfie himself that he has no Grace at all, or at least the Exercise of it is wofully suspended for the present, and he is

[†] Rev. 7. 14. | Matth. 20. 21,22. (a) Phil. 3. 10, 14.

in a fure way to lofe quite whatever he may have imagined himself to have. He never was very good, said the Devout Dr. Horneck, who desires not to be better; 'tis a sign of the Soul's Scurvy; but an Argument of the Excellency of Goodness in it felf, and of the Veneration that Conscience bears to it, that a few Grains of it shall support a Wretch, and make him fatisfied in himself. In short, the Passion shou'd be according to the real Merit of the Object, and without supine Inconsiderateness will be as the imagined Worth is. Therefore when People crave inordinately Things of no real Moment, they first fondly put an extravagant Price on them: we never defire much but we conceit and imagine as much; to justifie the raised Desire we first raise our Opinion of the Thing: and if we don't err in our Estimation we must needs be right in our cra-

There might other Reasons be affigued, and this in particular, That in our best Attainments here the Supplies of the Spirit are but in part: they are not all that God has to impart, nor that we may be made capable to receive. There is a Fulness in God as of an Immense Ocean, of whose Fulness we receive as the Rivulets that wind and straggle over the whole Earth. A finite and limited Nature can hold but its Meafure, and in this imperfect State we can receive but a Part even of what our Nature is capable of containing. We know but in part, therefore we shou'd be craving more and more as long as we live. Nay, when that which is perfect shall come, we are not to conceive that this Thirst will expire, nor the flowing Oil stay. The Angels in Heaven are ever full and have enough, yet doubtless ever grow and improve, receiving tafter than they can wish, happy in their grow-

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ing Defires which are always compleatly fatiffied. But in this World we can't but feel our Poverty and Indigence, and so breathe after a State of Perfection, cover earnestly the best Gifts. nor fear to be Infatiable; our Souls being apparently framed to defire Infinitely, in some Conformity to the Nature of God, who is the Infi-

nite, Immense, Inexhaustible Good.

And whether this is not the Disposition of every gracious Saint, and if it be not common to all that are Good and Holy, let their Experience testifie. When in one Breath the Apostie Peter had said, As new-born Babes, desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; he immediately adds, * If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: q. d. You will doubtless desire to grow in Grace if you have ever experienc'd a faving Work in your Souls. Defire grows with Grace, the most gracious Persons + long most to be like God and with him. It is the first thing a convinced Sinner feels, a burning Defire of Holiness, which often discovers it self in tormenting Fears, left really we do not wish for it for its own fake. And this is the abiding neverdying Spirit of pure Religion, the Wish which the dying Believer utters with his last Breath is, O for more of the Spirit and Righteousness of Chrift, my Redeemer! The Wicked on the contrary are urg'd on with a furious Thirst after the Pleasures of Sin, they hate that Holiness, which a good Man can't subsist under the keen Sense and Pain of the apprehended Want of; you can't gain their Confent to be made Holy, and much less can they find a Heart to pray and labour with Affiduity as the good Man will, left he fail of the Grace of God.

^{* 1} Pet. 2.2, 3. † Pfalm 42. 1. -63. 1. -84. 2. chiny into york, leads

Let us then take a Character of a good Man in a few Particulars, 1. He is an earnest, conftant Suitor to God for his Holy Spirit ||, whom God has promised to them that ask him. A Request never to be forgotten by a Saint: he never bows his Knees to God in fecret but he implores renewed Measures of Grace, that which is sufficient for bim. He has learnt this Prayer of his Saviour and of all the Saints of Renown in the Book of God *. He can't forget the affectionate and dying Prayer of his Saviour, Holy Father, keep through thy Name those whom thou hast given me! Keep them from the Evil. Nor can the Apoftle's repeated Prayer for the Churches slip his Mind: I bow my Knees (fays he) unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, - that he would grant you according to the riches of his Glory, to be strengthned with all might by his Spirit, &c. And again, The very God of Peace Sanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole Spirit, Soul, and Body, be preserved, &c. And again, This I pray, That your Love may abound more and more in Knowledge and in all Judgment: - That ye may be sincere and without offence till the Day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God. The time wou'd fail me to quote David and the Prophets + in the same Strains, My Eyes fail for the Word of thy Righteoufnes, - I opened my Mouth and panted, for I longed for thy Commandments. O Lord, we have waited for thee, the desire of our Soul is to thy Name and to the remembrance of thee: with my Soul have I defired thee in the night, with my Spirit within me will I seek thee early. A most grateful Prayer, and directed to by our Saviour ||, If thou knewest the gift

[|] Luke 11.13. * John 17.11. Pfal. 143.10. Eph. 3.16, 17. Phil. 1.9, 10, 11. † Pfalm 119. Ifa. 26. 8, 9. | John 4. 10.

of God, — thou wouldest have asked of him— living water. The Soul's Desires prepare it to taste the sweetness of the Gift, and to love the Giver. God chuses to bestow his Mercies there, where they are like to be relish'd and priz'd: to the hungry Soul is the least Morsel sweet. He fills the open Mouth, and satisfies the longing Soul, which tastes

his Goodness and is like to prove Grateful.

2. The good Man watches against the Things that grive the Holy Spirit and will cause him to withdraw, suspend or abate of his heavenly Motions and Influences. Without this Prayer is in vain and Hypocritical. There is no real Defire where there is not this Caution and Heed. Shall we pray for the Spirit, and not prepare a Temple for him to dwell in, not entertain him when he visits us? When we know what will affront and repulse him, shall we indulge it? When we know how to walk and please him, shall we not be studious of it? To obtain his abode with us! For if he depart the Supplies of our spiritual Life cease. Evil cannot dwell with him: any Sin allowed will lose us his gracious Presence, and precious Influences. Hence the good Man warches against every Temptation to Sin, and the appearance of it he shuns; he labours to keep in God's Way, and his Heart in fuch Frames as he approves; to get such a Spirit as the High and Lofty One will dwell in.

In particular, a good Man's Care and Prayer is against presumptuous Sins, that these have not Dominion over him, and wound him as deeply as they highly offend Heaven. So David lost the joyous Sense of God's Presence with him for a time *. Especially will custom and continuance in Sin do this, and the habit of hainous Trans-

Pfalm 51. 8, 11, 12.

gressions. As among Men a single Injury is resented, but if repeated and persisted in it causes a total Alienation, and we think it justifiable. And can we always | refift the Holy Ghoft, and run on against Heaven in the very Flashes of its Lightning, and look it shou'd be born? The Sinner wou'd despise the God hereafter whom he infolently affronts now, if he shou'd find him void of Resentments and disarm'd of Vengeance. To return, The good Man does not stifle and fuppress Convictions, or divert from 'em as Fælix did when he began to tremble: he does not throw 'em out of his Mind again as foon as he can, glad any ways to get rid of 'em as unwelcome Guests: as his Heart accuses he humbles his Soul, as it points to Duty he obediently goes about it; if the Word prick the Heart and the Blood thrill coldly, he does not hush those Fears, and calm himself to return to Folly; but he watches for the Motions of the Spirit, is attentive to his Voice, and asks help of him to do his Will. Such is his Care not to quench the Spirit: But on the contrary,

3. He diligently and uprightly attends the Means of Holiness. He carefully observes whatever has a tendency to promote it, and delights in such Means for the sake of the End advanced through them. Therefore we see him such a careful and constant Hearer of the Word, out of the abundant longing of his Soul after Holiness; because he believes this is the ordinary Means of it. He comes for Conviction, and to be invigorated, for Light and Strength both; to be fortisted against Trials, and armed against Temptations; to have some new Ward against the next Assault. The Children of God wou'dnot

frequent the Temple so much, but for this Gain and Profit to their Souls, and Glory redounding to Christ from their being edify'd in his Knowledge, Love, and Image: They hope and aim at passing from Strength to Strength, as they do from one Ordinance to another, till they be throughly furnished unto every good Work: They attend 'em as the Means of Growth and Perseverance. As on the other hand, the reason why so many neglect the Institutions of Christ is, because they are supine and careless whether they are Partakers of the Grace of God. They defire nothing less than this, and it may be fear

nothing more.

-27

The Good Man also spends many of his Evenings, or Night-Watches, in secret Prayer, and the Heavenly Dews fall plentifully about him. Heaven accepts and returns his Visits, and sheds down abundantly both on Head and Heart. For, as our Daily Bread is necessary to the Preservation of the Bodily Life, so is Prayer, Reading, Meditation, Holy Ejaculations, and Self-Examination, to the Life and Increase of Grace: In all which Duties we implore the Presence of the Spirit of God with us, for our Establishment and Proficiency in Holiness. These, to-gether with the more Solemn, Stated Ordinances of Publick Worship, are the way of Divine Communications, separated and sanctify'd for that End: Here the Lord commands the Bleffing, and in these the Good Man is found ex-So the Apostles waited for the Propecting it. mise of the Father in the Way and Place commanded, and the ascended Saviour was faithful to his Word, and endued them from on high.

And now let us improve this Doctrine, I. For Trial of Our selves, whether we have this Sign and Evidence of the Grace of God in us. Do

we feel a mighty Carefulness of Spirit to grow in Goodness, and continue in well-doing to the End? How do we bear the apprehended Want of Gracious Frames? Do we live easy notwithflanding? contented in the Conscience of a Graceless State? or satisfy'd with the Hopes of a little? There is no Quiet for a Good Soul without a growing Hunger and proportion'd Supplies. There cannot be a Glut and Cloy of Divine Dainties; by feasting on them the Appetite is sharpned. Nor is it to some particular Grace, but to all Graces; nor barely after this or that Degree, but the highest Measure attainable; to every possible Degree of every Grace. Is this then the Groaning of thy Spirit, -O God! I am not enough like Thee, I do not enough love Thee! Enlarge my Heart, and unite it to fear thy Name! Immoveably fix it, and confirm it like the steady Spirits above, in intense and seraphick Ardors to thy Glory! I blame, I loath my felf, because my Adorations are so unworthy of Thee, for want of stronger Love and more burning Zeal. I can never do enough for Thee, nor enjoy enough of Thee! O Thou boundless and incomprehensible Good! Eternity alone can suffice to know and serve Thee in! Give me, Methuselah's Days and Grace, yet I must have more, for more's behind! No attained Measure bounds me, no, not the Faith of Abraham, the Patience of Job, the Meekness of Moses, the Devotion of David, the Zeal of Elijah, Peter's Courage, John's Love, or Paul's Labours! No, but could I get all thefe Glorious Heights, I-would foar higher toward the Refurrection State, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ. This is the immortal endless Craving of the Heaven-born Soul, to receive everlastingly of an Immense Good. A Flame which never burns out, no more than the Sun in the Heavens.

2. If we find these Desires in Our selves, they are a ground of unspeakable Consolations. Be very thankful, take heart and rejoyce, and strive to out-do and excel. Own the diftinguishing Mercy of God to you, above many that live in a frozen stupid World. 'Tis of Free Grace that you are not senseless and dead as others. He bath filled the bungry with good Things. 'Tis a fign of a Soul in Health, to have a keen returning Appetite, while fo many pine away in mortal Confumptions. Your Lord has pronounced you bleffed * in this Hnnger and Thirft, and promised to see you filled. Tis a blessed thing to be sensible of our real Needs, to know how to prize Spiritual Mercies; to have our Defires off from Drofs and Sense, and fix'd intently on Heavenly Things. Here's a Soul that has made its Choice nobly and gloriously, is determin'd for God, and center'd on him, engross'd and swallow'd up in him; and if God can make his Creature Bleffed, this is fo. Conscience approves and smiles on this Disposition of Soul: And O the Delectation of Internal Peace, when a Man's Heart forces it upon him by its Applauses! Fools that we are to court any Mortal's Favour fo much as our own! the impartial, authoritative, irrefiftible Witness of God in our Behalf! There is a Voice within encouraging and animating a Man: - Wellemploy'd Friend! go on and prosper, and the Lord be with you! He will furely own and bless you, give thee thy Desire, and grant thy Petition! Thus a Man's Heart refreshes him, like the Angel of the Lord stands by him and strengthens bim. Neither the Devil's Malice, nor the Positiveness and Tartness of Fob's Friends, cou'd

^{*} Matth. 5. 6.

bear him down, while his own Heart did not

reproach him t.

In a Word, This Defire of Grace is effective of much Good, and propagates it within our Sphere; makes us Bleffings in our Places, and is rewarded with daily Gains and Victories. It repulses Temptation with Resolution and Vigour. and is a watchful Guard on the treacherous inclining Flesh. This craving Soul only seems to want, but really has all, and abounds and is full. He walks to Day, and to Morrow, and on the Third Day shall be perfected. He lives by his Redeemer, as | He by the Father. He may want many of the superfluous and fading Enjoyments of this World, but he has chosen the Good Part, the One Thing needful, and what matters this dufty Lumber? How much nobler and easier is it to have one inestimable Gemm, than a Cart-load of Trash? A more Portable Felicity, but of Immense Value.

3. A Third Use may be of Reproof to all those whose Desire is after unsatisfying Objects, being greedy of Vanity, which can never fill 'em, cold and indifferent to their True Good, or voracious after Sin and Wickedness. Every Soul has its Hunger, but generally the Appetite stands to some Sensitive Thing; Sensual Desires burn the Soul up. The lusting Israelites cou'd weep for the Melons and Garlick of Egypt, nauseating the Heavenly Bread: Our Soul is dried away, fay they*, for there is nothing at all besides this Manna before our Eyes. Our gross Hearts seldom relish the Bread of God: We postpone this to any fordid Object of Sense: Which is as Foolish as it is Impious: All the Labour of a Man is for his Mouth, yet the Appetite is not filled †: Let him have

t Job 27.5. || Joh. 6.57. * Num. 11.6. † Eccles. 6.7. his

his vast and licentious Wishes, 'tis but a Dream | of Good at last, he labours for that which is not Bread, wou'd fill his Belly with Husks; but it won't do, for it is the Food of a Swine, and not of a Soul: The Desire of the Wicked shall perish.

Some feem to have, at Times, Defires to the Grace of God, but as the Heats of a Fever-Fit, fo they come and go, and leave the chaff'd Heart again as cold as a Stone: 'Tis a pall'd Appetite and painted Fire: Insipid Lukewarmness, which can only provoke the Loathing of God. But Others are insatiable after Evil, (a) to drink down Iniquity like Water; they have a Thirst for Hell, and shall (b) have their Fill of the Wine

of the Wrath of God.

4. To conclude, Let us be exhorted to Earnestness in our Daily Prayers, and Watchfulness in our Walk to improve and grow in Holiness. Be continually addressing to Heaven for more Grace: no Importunity can be too much in this Matter. Call to mind the first Ardors of your Conversion, when Crowns and Scepters would have been given for the Assurance of a Grain of Grace; and compare your abiding Frame, to reproach your Decays and Relapfes into Indifferency and Coldness.

Confider carefully what has at any Time abated of your Holy Thirst after Spiritual Bleffings. What Company, Customs, Converse, Practices, have been found to damp and chill devout Affections. Avoid thefe, taking warning by the past Mischiess done you, the past Da-

mages fustained.

Defire always to experience that Power of Godliness which you have once. Improve zea-

^{||} Ifa. 29. 8. (a) Ifa. 5. 18. (b) Job. 4. 8. Prov. 1. 31. Ifa. 3. 9, 10, 11. 65. 13.

lously Sabbaths and all Ordinances for this End, to keep the kindled Fire blowing up. Do not play and trifle in the precious Seasons and Opportunities of Worship: What come you out to see and to receive? but the best of Portions, durable Riches and Righteousness. Lay in against the Time to come: You will need a Treasure to use upon all the Occasions, which will be returning upon us all the Days of our Life. We must have a Stock to live on, which will grow by using, and increase on our Hands.

Said our Lord, * I am come, that ye might have Life, and that ye might have it more abundantly. There is only wanting on our Part raised Defires, Industry, and Importunity, and we shou'd receive good Measure, pressed down, and running over. Our Safety and Peace, and the Glory of God, wou'd be abundantly confulted herein; for having Vessels of Oil by us we shou'd not fear our Lamps going out, and while thefe burn brightly, we cou'd lift up our Eyes with Serenity, looking for the Coming of Christ: + Knowing that be which raised up the Lord fesus, shall raise up us also by Fesus: For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant Grace might, thro' the Thanksgivings of many, redound to the Glory of God: for which cause ye faint not, but the the outsward Man perish, yet the inward Man is renewed day by day. Bebold, God will not cast away a perfect Man,till be fill thy Mouth with laughing, and thy Lips with rejoycing.

ings of Language

- VELICITY

^{*} John 10, 10. † 2 Cor. 4. 14, 15. | Job 8. 20, 21.

loully Sabbadas and all Order

MATTH. xxv. 5. Dinagnog

While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbred and slept.

PON how little Pretences will Men commonly indulge themselves in Sin! Nay, thro' the Love of Lust, how do they pervert Things contrary to the most obvious Designs of their Nature, and the Intention of Gcd! That ever the Forbearance and Goodness of God should be made an Argument as it is often by our wicked Hearts, why we should be negligent and slothful in the Matters of Religion! If the Bridegroom does tarry—we have the more Time to work, and our Time is a precious Talent, which we may make excellent Advantage of; but is lost in Slumber and Sleep, wasted unprofitably and perniciously.

This is the Iniquity censur'd in the Text,

wherein we may confider,

ber and Sleep. A thing in it self innocent enough, and necessary for the Sustentation of Nature, and Recruit of the tir'd Spirits; and that not only since the Fall of Man, but even in his State of Innocence; for so we read of a deep Sleep on Adam then. But Sleep is abused thro' the Sin of Man, and then is the Refuge of Sloth and Laziness, which is intemperately fond of it, and so the Word is used in an ill Sense, and put for that Iniquity which it is abused unto.

Slumbred and flept, scil. in a Spiritual Sense: i. e. were remis, careless, negligent, forgetful, secure with respect to the Things of Religion;

where-

whereas they should have been working out their Salvation with Diligence and Fear.

Slumbred and slept, Slumbred first, and slept afterward: Began at first with indulging a little to corrupt Nature, but by degrees, and in a little time fell into a sound Sleep, and lost almost al-

together the Senfe of Spiritual Things.

Slumbred and flept, Some do one, and some the other. All are not alike overcome and carry'd away, but in several degrees, some more than others, but all too much inclined to Security and Forgetfulness. He that slumbers only is more easily awak'd, the fast Sleep quite locks up the Senses, and you may do a great deal before you raise him: Nay, there is a dead Sleep, that you may cry aloud and beat a Drum in Mens Ears to no purpose, only the last Trump

can throughly awaken 'em.

The Greek Word rusaico, which we read to flumber, properly fignifies to nod, or take a Nap, and may well be put here for the common Infirmities of Good Men. The other Word radioolo is of a much worse and grosser Import. It is used in Scripture of the Sleep in deadly Sin and carnal Security, and so of the Sleep of Death: When one does libere somno indulgere, take one's fill, and give one's self up to Sleep. The Word is us'd of Christ's sleeping so soundly that the Tempest did not awake him: † indidds, he was in a fast Sleep: So that it is said the Disciples raised him, for so ought the Word is glew to be render'd, being often used of the Resurrection it self sleeping of the same Word is used of the dead Damsel (a), and also of the strange Sleepiness of the

^{*} Mark 13. 36. Eph. 5. 14. 1 Thess. 5. 6, 7. † Mark 4. 38. || Matth. 27. 52. John 2. 19. 1 Cor. 15. 12. (a) Matth. 9. 24. Luke 8. 52.

Disciples (b) in the Garden, of whom 'tis said their Eyes were heavy. In short, it is the Sinful Security, Sloth, and Insensibility of Christians, that is compared to Sleepiness: Some are less guilty than Others; Some are quite senseless

whilft Others only flumber.

2. Consider that the Charge is preferred against All the Ten Virgins; they All slumbred and slept, the Wise together with the Foolish, at Times at least, and in some degree. It is a General and Universal Charge of great Infirmity even in the very best of Men, and is a plain Resutation of their Folly and Error, who pretend to Perfection in this Life: For if we say we have no Sin, we must watch without so much as Draw-

fines or a Nod.

The reason of this general Sleepiness of Professions must be carefully observed, scil. while the Bridegroom tarried. As he does from his Ascension to the last Judgment, and all the Time of our Life, at the End of which he comes as to us in particular. This is no reason at all why we shou'd remit of our Watch, but it is made so thro' our Folly and Sin: We presume he won't come soon, because he has delay'd many Days past; and so we too often lay aside the Thoughts of his coming at all; you may take a Napor two stays the Tempter) and awake soon enough for it.

The Doctrine which we are here taught is this, That we are all too apt to include Spiritual Drowfinels and Sleep thro' the Forbearance of God. In the Profecution of this Truth, I will i. Endeavour a little further to explain the Phrases used, what Spiritual Sleep and Slumber means. 2. I will prove that even the Best Men are too prone to it, and often guilty of it. 3. That one great Reason

⁽b) Match. 26. 40, 43. Mark 14. 41.

of it is, the Forbearance of God in the Delay of the Appearance of Christ to Judgment. And laftly, I will show the great Folly and Sin of Slumbring on this forry Temptation.

I. What does Slumbring and Sleeping mean in a Spiritual Sense? and what is this Phrase DJ Phonisisty

used for in Scripture? I answer,

r. Sleep in Scripture is fometimes used for a State of Nature and Spiritual Death. It is indeed a Name for Natural Death (c), and a very apt Metaphor is it for the Visible State of the Dead, who fleep in the Dust of the Earth. Much more is it a gentle and fost Name for the Death of the Soul; but however really of a harsh Sense and Interpretation; for it often means a dead Sleep, final, judicial, and past feeling.

1. The State we are in by Nature is spiritually to be called a Fast Sleep, and so is our whole Unregenerate State. The Apostle Paul tells the Romans, * That it is high time to awake out of Sleep. We are awaken'd in our Effectual Calling, wherein the Spirit of God convinces and enlightens us. To the Theffalonians he also says, + Let not us sleep as do others. The reason of which Address may be learnt from the Character of those to whom it is made, scil. Let not us who are not in Darkness, who are all the Children of the Day and of the Light: Others will sleep, he does not expect better of 'em, Unregenerate Persons are afleep in their Original Darkness; but let not us who are enlightned and converted do fo, for ye Brethren are not in Darkness. Sleep is a Natural Image of Death, and therefore of a Natural State, which is a State of Death |. Awake thou that

⁽c) Dan. 12. 7. * Rom. 13. 11. † 1 Theff. 5. 6. Eph.

Reepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give

thee Life.

incomof Ohnik But there are some wretched Monsters of Wickedness, who are judiciously given up to final Insensibility, Senseless and lifeless, without the least Motion to any thing that is Spiritually good. Sleep is almost too kind a Name for the wretched Condition and Dispositions of such. A deep and final Sleep from the Lord, falls upon miserable Abusers of his Grace, whom you may call to and strike, but you may as well get a Corple to stir, or open its Eyes and answer you. All further Pains is like to be to little purpose in this deplorable State: The Threatnings of the Word may be thunder'd in these Mens Ears, the sweet Promises of the Gospel may be artfully fung, (as a very lovely Song of one that has a pleasant Voice, and can play well on an Instrument) the Law might be spoken over-again from the burning Mountain, or (hould one come from the deadit wou'd all seem but as a Vision of the Night, a Dream in Sleep, which may fometimes make a Man start, but not throughly awake him, and raise him from his Bed. Nothing less than the last Trump, which will awake the Dead in their Graves, can enter such lost Creatures.

To return, The least thing we can make of a State of Sin is a deep Sleep, in feveral re-

ipects.

1. As in Sleep we suspend the Use and Exercife of our Reason, nor at all perceive any acting of the Soul, fave in a confused Dream now and then: So in Unregeneracy Men seldom reason with themselves, or use their Understanding, setting themselves to consider; or if a Beam of Light break in sometimes, and bring a senfible Conviction with it, it presently vanishes again, and is forgotten as a Dream. Comply drew it is speak to the a scentil 2. As

2. As in Sleep the Senses are lock'd up, so in our Natural State they seem altogether lost. Can the Natural Man perceive the Things of the Spirit of God? Just as much as one asleep can see with his Eyes shut. Or does the Wicked Man hear what God fays to him, any more than if you talk to a Man asleep? Does he mind it? Is he edify'd? Does he remember it when you tell him you have been speaking to him? So the deaf Adder stoppeth her Ear. Again, Does the Wicked Man feel the Word, or the Lashes and Rebukes of Conscience? Doubtless he has many of 'em, but they don't rouze him up. So I have known a Man under a long fleepy Distemper for many Weeks together, whose Body was put into Sweats and Tremblings by the Violence done him to awake him, the strongest Sternutatories being blown up into his Nostrils to no other purpose but to put him into some degree of Agony and Convulsion, but cou'd not bring him to his Senses. A sad Image of fleepy Sinners, whom we may pierce with the Sword of the Spirit, and fet a trembling like Falix, and yet not ever once throughly awaken: So also God sometimes * bath poured out the Fury of his Anger in awful Providences, and it hath fet him on Fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart. This is the Spirit of Slumber t, Eyes that they should not see, and Ears that they should not bear unto this Day.

3. As the Passions and Affections of Men asleep can't be come at, so is it with Men in a Natural State: What can win upon 'em, or what scare 'em? Can the Goodness of God, or can his Terrors? We address to the Natural Desires of Mens Souls, to their Hopes and Wishes, and to

^{*} Ifa. 42, 25. † Rom. 11. 8.

their Fears and Loathings; we tempt their Ambirion, and we try if they have any Shame, any Sense of Honour and Dishonour; but we labour in vain, we prophecy, if not over a Valley of dry Bones, yet to a Congregation asleep, whose Passions are not to be stirr'd but by their own

Imaginations in their Dreams.

We bring a Crown of Life and Glory in our Hand, and plead with Men as for our own Lives, when all the while it is for theirs, but as Men asleep they are insensible of Good. We warn the Wicked Man of Death and Judgment just before him, the Sword of Justice at his Heels, cry to him, as of Old it was to sleeping Sampson ||, The Philistines be upon thee; yet, like a Man asleep, he is not at all apprehensive of Danger: Let his Enemy come with his Sword drawn, he lies fair and secure, as in the Arms of his Friend.

4. As Sleep chains down and fetters the Powers of Action, so Sin brings a Spiritual Inactivity. You know there can be no Work done in our Sleep, the Arms are folded up or hung down idly; whence Sleep is become a Name for Sloth; ye a little Slumber (a) fays the Sluggard. And, I pray, is not this the Character of the Wicked? What does he in the World? What Service for Christ? What for his own Soul? Has he taken a Step toward Heaven? Has he not bury'd his Talent, which is his own Image, he lying still on his Bed of Sloth, as that in its Hole, and for any Work done by him he might be as well in his Grave! The Wicked Man dozes away his Life without fo much as beginning what Death shou'd find finish'd *. He may have been purposing from time to time that

Judg. 16. 14. (a) Prov. 10. 24. * John 17. 4.

he will set about it, but never begun to this Day, nor ever will it may be. And may it not be well ask'd, Whether the Man has not slept away his Life? for if he had been but one Day awake, he wou'd have had something to show, some little thing at least done for his Soul's Salvation. So that there is sufficient Reason why a State of Nature is represented by Slumbring and Sleeping.

2. The Infirmities of Good Men may defervedly be call'd so too. Their Life is imperfect, and they have their Ill Fits; they are weak and infirm, and far from Perfection: not so watchful, circumspect, diligent, constant, but there are Intermissions of the lively Exercise of Grace, and so often they drowze and forget themselves and their Work. They are not always fully awake, tho' they do not sleep as do others.

Here then let me impeach the Infirmities of the Best of Saints, which they'll be ready to own, and think themselves savourably dealt with, to have no worse a Name than Stumbring put on them. When Good Men do but abate of their Vigour and Astivity in Holy Living, it is nothing less than their slumbring. They had more Life and Spirits it may be just now, were well dispos'd, zealous, and servent; but as weary'd Men after a hard Day's Work, they grow dull, and heavy, and sleepy. Poor frail Man, how little a time together can he keep awake! The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak †.

All Negligence and Remissness is so much Slumber. Instant Care and Industry is Wakefulness ||, I will not give Sleep to mine Eyes, or

[†] Matth. 26. 41. | Pfalm 132. 2, 4, 5.

Slumber to my Eye-lids, until I find out a Place, &c. As much Sloth so much Sleep: it casteth into a deep Sleep (a). Inadvertence is from dozing, the wakeful Mind is intent on its great Concerns, attentive to the Voice of Conscience and the Word. We drowse whenever we forget our Selves, our Work and Wages; when the great and awful Thoughts of Eternal Things go out of our Minds: I am sure Good Men are apt to complain of as much as this comes to of God himself, when he seems regardless of their Prayers and Case: (b) Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord, arise, cast us not off for ever: Stir up thy self, and awake to my Judgment.

If we are but listless and dull in Holy Duties, our Hearts and Eyes are heavy and asleep. Said the Spouse in her dull Fit, I sleep, but my Heart waketh *. Watchfulness is our waking; Watch ye therefore, lest coming suddenly be find you sleeping.

It is time now to infer,

II. That the Best Men are chargeable with, and guilty of too frequent Slumbers. They all slumbred and slept. What Good Man is there that has not many Frailties, Corruptions and Falls to bewail himself under †? Hence come their daily urgent Prayers and renewed Repentance.

Impenitent Sinners are in the ready way to contract more and more Heaviness Day by Day; Satan blinds 'em, and if it were put to us as it was to the Prophet in a like Case ||, Son of Man, can these snoring Men ever hear? We must make his Return, Lord, thou knowest; Thy Voice can reach 'em, tho' ours can't. Nor can we always promise for the truly Godly:

⁽a) Prov. 6. 10, 11. 19. 15. (b) Pfalm 44. 23. 35. 23. *Cant. 5. 2. † Ecclef. 7: 20. Jam. 3. 2. || Ezek. 37. 3.

It may be an Hour of Temptation, a Season of the present Prevalence of the Flesh, lusting against the Spirit, and then for a while there is little discernible Difference between Them and Others. We have many fad Proofs of this in Scripture Instances; (a) What dreadful Work did Lot make in his unnatural Sleep? and Sampson while he lay with his Head in the Harlot's Lap? and David in his long Stupidity? What a time lay he dofing till Nathan came and rouz'd him? When Peter fell he was not quite recover'd from his Heaviness in the Garden; his sleeping there against the Warnings of Christ, expos'd him unprepar'd and in his Surprize to his After-Temptation: The Soldiers that feiz'd his Lord awoke him by their rude Noise and Action, and he fled in amaze. The Disciples in the Garden were a melancholy Image of the Best of Saints: There are Times when they can't watch one Hour, let Christ and Conscience command it never so much. We are often in the worst Frame when we should be in the best; dullest when we should be most lively and active. We are too often off our Guard in Times of Hazard, and like Criminal Centinels drowze on the Guard. Humane Nature has triumph'd over the Tempter in the Person of Christ, but no meer Humane Person ever did, and had nothing found in him.

i. The actual falls of good Men are a convincing Evidence of their too frequent flumbers. Satan never throws us but when we give an Advantage: as the Philistines shaw'd Sampson in his criminal sleep. Like Eutychus (b) we fall by sleeping, and are taken up for dead it may be; or, at

⁽a) Gen. 19. 35. Judg. 16. 19. 2 Sam. 12. 7. Mark 14. 41. (b) Act. 20. 9, 10.

least, with broken Bones. The good Manner-members the sleepy Frames that did fore-run his dreadful Falls one time or other: What a strange Inadvertence and Security there was preceding it! Prayer was intermitted, the Watch negle-cted, Closet-Devotion at best coldly and indifferently attended: and when Slumbers have so far closed up Mens Eyes and solded their Arms, it is the easiest thing in Nature and almost unavoidable to totter and reel and tumble down.

2. The Prayers of good Men show their Sense of their Danger. They pray for quickening, because they find themselves dull and heavy; for preventing Grace because they find themselves tripping, and for Pardon which confesses actual Falls. The solemn Humiliations of the best of Saints are a most affecting Proof of their sinful Falls: there needs no more * than Dawid's Penitential Psalm, and Peter's Tears, and Paul's mournful lamenting himself. A sorrowful Confession in pungent Accents. O the deep Gashes in Conscience which a Child of God

may roar out under.

3. If good Men had not their fleepy Fits we shou'd know them exactly and perfectly from the Wicked, and need not wait till the Judgment for the Separation. We might judge Men before their Day, nor need any good Man want Assurance of his own good Estate, nor cou'd we without manifest Malice ever put a good Man among the Wicked. For, there wou'd be no blemish at all on him, no Mote in his Eye; and then the difference wou'd be as plain as between a Blackamoor's Skin and a White, or between the Sun and a Clod of Dirt. Whereas we do not, cannot know Men perfectly here below,

^{*} Pfalm 51. Matth. 26. 75. Rom. 7. 24. Pfalm 32, 3, 4.

there being so many Hypocrites who look fair and good, and good Men of so many Failings and Infirmities that (to their own shame as well as dolour) they give much Reason for Fear and Suspicion to themselves and others. If we were to judge, we shou'd justifie many Wicked and condemn many Righteous, because we know not the Secrets of Men; there being the Spots of God's Children.

I have two Reflections to hint at here. 1. It affords Matter of Abasement and Self-enquiry to the best of us. We may find Folly and Imperfection enough in our selves to assonish and terrise us; the Coldnesses of every Week and Day, and almost of every Duty. And if Saints of the first Class and Rank have found this, how much more may we, the lesser Stars, of so different a Glory visibly, and in so much lower an Orb. We may well blush and bide our selves perceiving our own Nakedness; at Job's Degree of Holiness we may see our selves wile, and need to make his Prayer, How many are mine Iniquities and Sins? make me to know em!

But then what Confusion shou'd cover the Wicked at the sight of themselves? Where shall the Ungodly appear! The lustful Goat, the swinish Glutton, the beastly Drunkard, the Profane and Blasphemous, or the demure but salse Hypocrite! What Styes of all Abominations are these! Who shall not stand in the Congregation of the Righteous, tho' but impersed they also at the best.

2. Let good Men be admonished to keep a constant Watch over themselves, lest they seep as do others. You see your Insirmity and Hazard, O pray that you enter not into Temptation! It is good and necessary Advice for seepy Disciples. Use the rousing Means for your own Prevention, and especially watch unto Prayer with all Perseverance.

Don't go to awakening Ordinances to drowfe there: a double Iniquity to fleep even there. Your Tempter is every where at hand, you carry a corrupt Nature always about with you; your Danger is always and in all Places, and fo fhou'd your Watch be. Especially let me name two Seasons.

I. After sensible Decays renew your Watch. The Circumstance is awakening: you know what Carefulness this self-same thing wrought in David, yea, what Indignation, what Fear, what webement Desire—. Improve your Falls at least to quicken you. If a Man fall from a Precipice it either wakes him, or, which is worse, it kills him: if he don't cry out we apprehend he is

dead : it stuns at least if it don't kill.

2. After your best Frames and Diligences then watch also. Then we are apt, as a tired Man, to crave Rest. There will be some Expence of the Spirits, which ask some Recruit by a relaxation and unbending the Bow a little. The hazard is of cooling too sast, and relapsing into security. Satan is ready to take the Advantage of a spent Man to wrestle with him. He stays till Flesh and Blood will most eagerly Importune with and for him: as when our Lord had sasted forty Days, and his Hunger was as extraordinary as his Fasting, and then he begins—— If thou be the Son of God, command that these Stones be made Bread.

Or, it may be, O frail Christian, when you have been most with God he'll flatter you into Security by suggesting, — Now all's well, this truly was bravely done, you have made a fair Advance this time, and 'tis enough for once, refresh your self and never fear falling after this. So (it may be) thought Peter, I have been lately with my Lord in the Mount, and seen him in

Glory,

Glory, and the first Saints in Heaven waiting on him, and now stand off all that dare deny and oppose him! Can I my self disown him? What, after I have in a manner been in Heaven with him! No, I am confident I cannot and dare defie Temptation: tho' all men shou'd deny him yet cou'd not I, but can easily die with him. You know the Issue, and how to apply it. Be therefore as humble and vigilant as ever after you have been taken up nearest to Heaven. You have the same evil Heart within you which was before, and you are returning into the same evil World, where the same Temptations will yet meet you; and it is not your past Enjoyments that are your Security, but your abiding Faith and future Diligence. World from the Well

III. One great cause of the sleepiness of Christians is the Goodness and Forbearance of God in the delay of the Appearance of Christ to judge. While the Bridegroom tarried. He spares us through a confiderable Term of many Years, and because Judgment is not speedily executed * we grow fecure and negligent, and harden our felves. Not that this can be any Temptation to any one that will but use his Reason, much less can it be the meaning of Divine Forbearance that we shou'd grow secure and careless thereupon, nor is there any proper and natural tendency in the Thing to effect this, but much the contrary: But our Corruption can strangely turn Things as it will, even the Goodness of God into Wantonness: of which this is one odd but common Instance, to loiter in the great Affairs of our Souls, because the Day of Death and Judgment tarries.

^{*} Ecclef. 8. 11.

That God is patient and long-suffering we abundantly experience, as well as find testified in Scripture. It is a Perfection often celebrated as one Eminent Part of his Glory †. Among Men a patient Spirit is accounted a great Extended the fad Effects of the contrary Spirit daily, in the wild and surious Passions of Men: He that is slow to wrath is better than the Mighty !! It is the greatest Evidence of Power and Might, the Empire over our selves. Moses therefore makes it an Argument of the great Power of God, that he bears with such vile sinful Creatures as we are, Let the Power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken saying, The Lord is

long-Suffering and of great Mercy.

The continuance of the World from the Fall of Adam is one comprehensive Proof of the glorious Forbearance of God. But the Instance here chosen for me is, The Patience of God expreffed to particular Persons, in the prolongation of their Lives, the delay of their Deaths, more especially under the Enjoyment of the Means of Life. Nor is my Business to state the Nature and Exercise of Divine Patience, and then prove that God is patient to Sinners in reprieving them from Day to Day; but to confider how this glorious Forbearance is abused ordinarily by Men, and made an Argument of to indulge Sloth and Idleness. And this I shall endeavour to prove true, 1. Of the Wicked and Impenitent; And, 2. Of the truly Godly themselves too often; these also being rock'd asleep by this unaccountable Temptation, The Bridegroom tarrieth.

[†] Exod. 34. 6. Num. 14. 17, 18. Plalm 86. 15. 103. 8.

^{1.} Wicked

r. Wicked and ungodly Men are frequently fo. They are carried headlong by this vainest Thought, they catch at any Shadow of Countenance to their Corruptions, to hearten them but for an Hour or a Day. So the evil Servant encourag'd himself to grow sensual and oppress bis Fellows (a), My Lord delayeth his coming, fays he. The Sinners of the Old World despised Noab's Prophecy and Preparations against the Flood, when it came not for a bundred and twenty Years together (b): they mock'd at him and his Prediction and grew worse and worse, because Judgment was not speedily executed. And it is the same Reason which the Scoffers in the latter Days will give for all their Mocks and Blasphemies, whilft they walk after their ungodly Lusts *, Where is the Promise of his Coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation. 'The Fathers sleep (as you call Death) and are like to do fo still for ought we see; the Conflagration is not come after fo many Centuries; this makes some Men bold to live as if the Promise and the Threatning were a Lye. The evil Heart of Unbelief catches at any Cavil against the Truth, be it never so filly: any show of a Reason will go a great way with profane Men when it speaks in favour of their Lufts; nay, any Absurdity will go down. What Pretence of Argument is this, Death or Judgment can't come quickly because they are not already or long ago: we defend this vain Thefis, the Devil taking the Chair to affift and help us out, against all that Scripture and Reafon can alledge to oppose it. How easily is Infidelity strengthned! We are easily brought to believe what we wou'd fain have true; and to

⁽a) Matth. 24. 48, 49. (b) 1 Pet. 3. 20. 2 Pet. 3. 4.

M disbe-

disbelieve Threatnings which we hate, and Promifes which we fee are not like to belong to us. A Heart that hates Truth and Reason, will draw Conclusions in its Prejudice from the weakest Grounds. It is enough for the Fool to fay - There's no God or Providence, Good or Evil, and confequently no Judgment to come, only because he (vile Sinner!) and wretched Fellows like himself are not judg'd and cast into Hell long ere this Day. Indeed it has fometimes stumbled good Men t, but one wou'd think that the Wicked shou'd take no Offence at their own being spar'd and forborn. Doubtless they are enough pleas'd in it, and especially because of the Liberty and Boldness they take to sin on.

I can produce you many guilty Instances | of wicked People growing fecure in Sin under God's gracious Forbearance. Some have hence shut Holiness out of their Notion of a God. These things thou didft and I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thy self. Others have grown bold and audacious, I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest not. Heaven is silent, the Thunder does not roar, and Men grow fearless: or, because they have no Changes. Infidelity has pleaded in its own Defence from this: Where is the word of the Lord? let it come: Let us see the Threatning executed or we won't believe. Nay, in Ezekiel's Time it was grown into a Proverb in Ifrael, The Days are prolonged and every Vision faileth. Hereby they hard'ned one another to go on for the present at least in their vicious Courses. The Sin of Moab, who being at ease from his Youth, and not emptied from Vessel to Vessel, settled on his Lees,

[†] Pfalm 73. | Pfalm 50. 51. 55 19. Ifa. 57. 11. Jer. 17. 15. 48. 11. Ezek. 12. 22.

and his ill Scent was fix'd. I might find many more fuch Instances on Record, but I had rather persuade wicked Men to look at home, for they need not go out of themselves for Witness.

Let me therefore appeal to every impenitent Sinner, and demand of him: What has been your most abiding Temptation, and common Refuge, in your evil Courses? What have you prefum'd and rely'd on? Strengthning your felves in Wickedness - has it not been this? My Lord tarries, I hope I may have many Years vet to live, and Time enough to repent hereafter. If it were told you and you credited it, that you must die to morrow and go to Judgment, wou'd it not alarm you from your stupid Courfes? Yes: as you fee poor Wretches that expect a Gallows next Week in mighty Anguishes. for their Souls; but reprieve 'em and they return to their Sins again with fresh Desires, because they seem to have a Life once more before 'em. So then the Occasion of thy continuing in Sin is from God's forbearing thee: the Sinner's Conscience tells him so, he knows it of himself that upon this corrupt Reasoning he has gone on in destructive Courses all his Life long. O, who of us have not had this Infidel Thought many a time in our Minds! And who is there Impenitent but at least goes on this Presumption, I hope Death is not near me, I trust I shall live to repent! If not on a worfe, I hope there will indeed be found no God nor Day of Reckoning at all! At least if there be, I'll sleep on while he tarries, and awake as his Coming draws pigh. This is the filly Delufion, but faral, that has flain its Thousands.

2. Good Men themselves are too frequently prevail'd on and carried aside by this Temptati-

on. The Devil uses the same Snare to trap good Men which he takes the Wicked in; only it is not of equal Force on both; as equal Opiates have not the same Power on different Constitutions, and as a single Hair will take a weaker Bird white a stronger breaks the Snare it self: that casts one into a fast sleep which will only make another to drowse. But Slumber the very best may come to do, and the Forbearance of God may be the Occasion of it. There is a manifold Inference which the Devil teaches to make from it.

. To doubt and question the Truth and Certainty of the Promise: and so the Faith of the Elect is fomerimes shaken. The Flesh is very prone to this falle Conclusion, that Things delay'd and at a distance must needs be uncertain. . Faith is at the last Defiance with fuch a Thought: yet sometimes it is winnowed and shaken in the Wind, and it may be comes to that - Doth bis Promise fail for evermore? A sifted Faith may have many Reasonings, Fears, Questionings, which the Man despises and detests when he comes to himself. The Devil's aim and spite is ar our Faith, the Evidence of Things not seen, and whereby we are to live; against this he lets fly all his fiery Darts which this only can quench; he fifted Peter in hopes that his Faith wou'd fail.

Unbelief is natural to us, and easily fomented: it catches at a Hint and answers the Tempter

too readily, yielding him the Argument. 103

2. Advantage is sometimes made of the holy Desires of good Men for the coming of Christ to tempt them to Impatience at the delay of it. Their eager Wish and Prayer is, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Make baste my Beloved, and be rhou like unto a Roe or a young Hart upon the Mountains of Spites! All this is very Holy and as becomes the espoused

espoused of Christ, who earnestly expect his Presence as their Souls love his Person: but the earnest Expectation of Love being naturally impatient of delay, Satan lays hold of the Advantage and whispers softly, — He tarries long! How are your Prayers answered? He is not coming yet! You have been expecting and wishing long enough, you owe your self some respit, or indeed may well grow uneasse: give over so vain a Labour, sit down and despond, or forget your vexing Hope in a sew Slumbers! Hope deserved maketh the Heart sick; and the Soul sick with wai-

ting must needs grow remiss.

2. To beget this Impatience we represent to our selves this delay of the Promise, as if the longer we wait for it, it were the further off. When we first begin to think of the Coming of Christ, we represent it to our selves as near at hand, and in this we do wifely and justly: but when Day after Day we have been meditating on Death and it comes not, we are very liable to put it more at a distance than we did before. Not that there's the least Reason why we shou'd do so, for really our Salvation is nearer than when we first believed: but Sense wou'd deceive us to think otherwise - The Vision is for many Days to come, and the Prophecy of things that be afar off. This is an Infatuation of Hell, and wou'd render Faith like the Flesh super-annuated and feeble with Age. But it is against all Sense: The Promises advance nigher to us every Day than other, and shou'd hourly seem so: the Vision is for an appointed time, if it tarry wait for it, it will come and not terry.

4. And lastly, By the delay of the Promise sometimes the Labour of the Christian Life is hideously Misrepresented. So long thou hast wrought and waited, and to an Eye of Sense art M 2 just

just where thou didst begin! So many laborious Hours and Days spent already, and it may be double the number to come yet! After so many weary Steps can you travel on? It may be not half Way up the Hill yet! Come, fit down and rest there; how pleasant will the Shadow be from the Heat? Ask with the Prophet, Why thou may'st not die now.. But we must not be discouraged by this fallacious Over-greatning our Work and the length of the Way, nor think that lying down to rest will refresh us for fourneys yet behind. It is just as if a Traveller, spent with the Heat of the Day, shou'd fall asleep under the next Shade not minding that the Sun has been a good while declining: for grant he take but a short Nap, yet the Sun will be low, and he had need flart up and double the Pace he went in the Morning, or the dark Night will be upon him. In short, the' Difficulties shou'd be a Spur to Diligence, yet the best Men are apt to make 'em an Excuse for Sloth. And thus I have in fome Measure shown, how the Forbearance of God is abusively improved to the encouraging our selves in Remisness if not in Impenitence.

Temptation, and much more on such as this.

First, It grieves the Holy Spirit, and causes him to withdraw. The sleepy Spouse rose at last

IV. I am now to argue the great Folly and Sin of growing remiss and careless in Duty on this Reason, because God in his rich Forbearance delays to call us to his Judgment. It is both Folly and Wickedness to sumber and sleep because the Bridegroom tarries.

r. It is extreamly hazardous, and 'tis Folly to run any great Hazard needlesly. Now the Hazard is,

in haste, but sound her Beloved withdrawn and gone! Her preceding Coldness was sufficient Affront and Provocation. He is a quickning Spirit, it is dangerous to withstand him in his Office. For if upon our Resistance he forsake us, we are in danger of the deadly Sleep, never to awake again. Than which what Evil or Hazard can be greater! We quench the heavenly Fire which he wou'd kindle, and Light and Heat depart together. The Torment of Hell may remain with the Disposition of it, as a doleful Earnest of it.

Secondly, It exposes and lays us open to the Tempter. If our Enemy find us sleeping he may easily wound us to death. Said Abishai, when he faw the Spear drawn at the sleeping King's Bolfer, Let me (mite him to the Earth at once, and I will not smite him a second time. There is no need of a fecond Blow, when we have one fair one at an Enemy asleep. Saul scap'd well with the loss of a Skirt only, but he fell into the Hands of a dutiful, merciful and generous Son *, whereas the Enemy of our Souls is malicious and bloody. The Philistines are upon the Man who is loitring, idling, and pursuing forbidden Pleasures out of God's Way: the next News we hear of him is like to be, that they have put out his Eyes and bound bim with Chains t. While Men fleep, the Enemy comes, fays our Saviour ||: and he goes too without being in the least perceived: you may find in time who has been near you by the Mischief done. When David had that great Blow given him, (a) which he afterward groan'd and roar'd fo under the Pain of, he was found remiss and airing himself on the Roof of his House: he saw

^{* 1} Sam. 24. 5. † Judg. 16. 21. | Matth. 13. 25.

and fell, so easily do Temptations carry whom they find idle. They invite the Tempter and give the Enemy Opportunity to come at them. What more can he desire than to see us secure and off from our Guard? For our Adversary is mean and treacherous, he does not stay to bid us draw and defend our selves, but waits till we throw by the Sword of the Spirit, and then runs in upon us naked, and we awake with his Sword in

our Side.

. . . .

Thirdly, By flumbring we run a fearful Risque of a fudden Call. For ought we know the Judge may be at the Door the very Moment we lie down to fleep. It is very awful to confider how often the Summons of Death is fent fuddenly, to the fad furprize of miserable Men; we see it and are made to tremble, left we our felves be the next Instances for the Alarm of others. God fometimes makes quick Work and cuts Men off in Righteousness; they die in their sleep, and awake not to cry once for Mercy. We have fuch awful Examples on facred Record*, which may be again exemplified in our Days. Indeed they are fingular Sinners who are usually made extraordinary Examples; yet it may be we have as great Beafts as Nabal among our felves, and as sensual Men as the rich Fool in the Gospel, who promise themselves as many Years of Luxury as he did, and may be as fuddenly fnatch'd away, - Thou Fool, this night shall thy Soul be required.

It is a fearful Risque run, to slumber when every Moment may be our last. Our Life hangs by a single Thread, which the least Accident imaginable may break. And what if the Judge

Numb. 16. 31. 1 Sam. 25. 38. Luke 12. 20. Acts

thou'd of a fudden call for you! + if coming fuddenly be find you fleeping? Is it a fit Posture to be taken in? Will not Death then close your Eyes for ever? Where will you awake? With him who in Hell lift up his Eyes being in torments | ? O fecure Soul, how great is thy Madness? Greater than Jonab's who slept on in the Storm when the Vessel was ready to founder; the Heathen Mariners were aftonish'd at his Security, and very futably address'd him, as I wou'd do every flumbring Christian, What meanest thou, O Sleeper, arise and call upon thy God. Doubtless the Storm look'd much the more dreadful to him as he flarted out of his Sleep; but how much worse had it been to have gone down to the Bottom in it?

Finally, The Danger is plainly told us in most dreadful Threatnings (a), that Men treasure up Wrath against themselves, shall never enter into the Rest of God, shall be surprized in a Day when they look not for it, and in a Hour that they are not aware of, be cut asunder and have their Portion appointed with Hypocrites, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth. This shall be the Lot, whatever be his Place in the Church, or his Degree in the World: speedy Destruction may be looked for, and to be sure most Intollerable: that Part of Hell where most of that sad Dinn will be—wailing and gnashing of Teeth.

You see the Hazard run, and is it not a dreadful one? Is he not a Fool that will indulge Sloth on this amazing Hazard? How sorely must Men suffer for their carnal Ease and pleasing Slumbers. This is the first Proof of the Folly of Security thro the Forbearance of God. I will not inlarge on

the rest.

[†] Mark 13. 36. || Luke 16. 23. (a) Rom. 2.4. Heb. 3. 2. It

2. It is Folly, if it were only that it lays in for a bitter Repentance. Suppose you find Mercy to awake on this side Eternal Burning, will it not be in a fright? Can it be without Horror at your Guilt and Hazard? Can you look back on your Escape, and not fall dead with Astonishment at what might have befallen you! And at last the Pain of Repenting is a dear Price for a few sluggish Slumbers.

3. It is Folly to sleep, because Life is so short, and our Work great. There is no Time to spare, Life is not too long for our Business, and 'tis our only Season: as if a Husbandman shou'd sleep all the Summer, the time of Planting and Reaping.

The Night cometh wherein no Man can work.

The Sinner fleeps through the Forbearance of God, - Is it that he is weary of being forborn! Is he tired, and displeased at God's Patience? Does he think God waits too long upon him? Wou'd he be thankful if God wou'd burn up the World to Morrow, or call him out of it to Day? Does he quarrel at living fo long? Wishes he to die? Thinks he the Age of the World unreasonably great, or his own Age either? No. He desires Life and many Days; he wou'd tremble if he thought Death near him, and run his Head into any Hole under Ground if he faw the Day of the Lord coming: his Prayer wou'd be- O spare me yet a while, before I go hence and be no more! You will fay then, What makes the Man lose his Life in Sleep and Loitering? Truly the Thing is unaccountable: God's Forbearance makes him sleep, and yet he never thinks that Forbearance long enough; the Hope of Death's distance makes him negligent, yet he knows he can never have too much Time to prepare for it.

will out most by the state!

4. And lastly, It is foolish and hazardous to sleep, because we cannot awake again when we list. It were something however if you cou'd promise that you wou'd not sleep above a Day, or a Year either; but a Man asleep has no command of himself, 'tis very easie and common to oversleep our selves, the Day is presently gone. If we awake soon 'tis usually owing to some external Means, otherwise we take our fill and satisfie Nature, and you know that corrupt Nature is Insatiable.

God has not given us any Promise or Ground to hope that he will awake us in time, if we give our selves up to sleep; no, but he bids us watch, and beware of Slumber: if he ever say—Sleep on now and take your Rest, it is either Sarcastical or Judicial; a bitter Reproach, or a License which is a Curse: either to upbraid us, as our Saviour did his Disciples *, bidding them to sleep on if they cou'd, when the Roman Guards were upon them, and he knew they wou'd be awak'd with Fright enough; or the Judicial Sense is, sleep on and awake no more till your Eyes close in Death, take your rest now, for none remains for you for ever hereaster. There can be no sleeping in the Flames of Hell.

And if God do not awake you, can we? Or you your selves? No more than you can raise your self from the Dead. God quickneth whom he will, even the Dead; it must be his Voice and Spirit, and your criminal Sleep is a Provocation to him not to give the Word.

What Folly then is it to give way to our listless Frames? for ought you know you lie down not to rise again till the Heavens be no more †: That Judgment may be thine, O miserable Soul, || They

^{*} Matth. 26. 45. † Joh 14. 12. | Jer. 51.57.

shall sleep a perpetual Sleep, and not awake, saith the King whose Name is the Lord of Hosts. A Judgment horrible and astonishing! (a) Stay your selves and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with Wine, they stagger, but not with strong Drink: (No, but thro' the Spirit of Senslessness sent in judgment on them) for the Lord bath poured upon you the Spirit of deep Sleep, and bath closed your Eyes. O, if the least Grain of Sense be left, deprecate such a Judgment! This for the Folly of Slumbring while God forbears us.

2. It is also a great Guilt; a beinous Sin. And if the Iniquity of it be not felt, and that affectingly now, it will lie heavy on the Soul when tis too late to repent. The Guilt is very plain,

For,

1. It is against many serious Cautions, and plain Precepts of Watchfulness, Diligence and Constancy, pres'd upon us in the Word of God. So often as these are vehemently required, so often is Slumbring and Negligence forbidden, God allows none in Idleness, but has bid the Loiterers go to work in his Vineyard. Every Man has a great Work to do in caring for his Soul. The Body of Sin is as a monstrous Hydra, from which as you cut off one Head, there starts up another in its room: How hard a Labour is it then to mortifie and keep it under? Never to be done if we give Sleep to our Eyes, &c. Our Duty is compared to a Race and a War (b) Now they that run in a Race put forth all their Strength, and that go to War force through many Hardships and Hazards. Endure bardness (fays the Apostle) as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ: 'If the Sentinel be found Sleeping on the Guard, tis Death by the Martial Law; so is it by the Law

⁽a) Ifa. 29. 9. (b) 2 Tim. 29 3. 11 Cor. 9. 26.

of Christ, the Captain of our Salvation, if we sleep in the Posts wherein he has fee us. Suppose a fleepy or lazy Person had made one in the Grecian Games or Races, how ridiculous had he look'd. and what Laughter had he rais'd? Sloth muft be shaken off ere we shall strive for the Mastery.

But we have more direct Precepts * in this Matter. We are commanded to have our Loins girt. to fland fast in the Faith, to quit our febres like Men. and be strong: To give all Diligence; to be fervent in Spirit, and zealoufly affected in a good thing: To be stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And now I appeal to you, if this can any ways confift with the Indulgence of Sleep and carnal Eafe. How do we observe his Command, who has called us to be Soldiers? Well therefore does the Parable + joyn 'em, Thou wicked and flotbful Servant! The Nature of a Service freaks the Wickedness of Sloth, for there can be no Fidelity without Diligence. All Sleep is fo much Disobedience, because the Command is to Watch.

2. To take Occasion to slumber, because God forbears us, is a manifest Abuse of rich Goodness. and fo chargeable with high Ingratitude, and perverse Difingenuity. We grow wanton under great Favour, and return Injury for repeated Benefits. We turn Grace into Lasciviousness, in dulging the Flesh because it abounds.

The gracious Defign of God is, to give us all Space for Repentance, and Opportunity to work out our Salvation. The natural tendency of sparing Mercy is to lead us unto this. The Parable of the Fig-tree lets us know, That Barrenness is a most

provoking Abuse of Divine Forbearance.

Luk. 12: 36. 1Con 46. 13. 15. 18. Heb. 6. 11, 12. † Mar. 25. 26. Rom. 2. 4. 2 Pet. 3. 9. Luk. 13. 7.9. Rev. 2. 23. SATT

The Mercy and Grace of God are abundantly manifested herein, and lay the utmost Bond on us to fall in with his Design: If we judge fairly, what must we not account the Long-suffering of God to be? no less than Salvation designed to us herefrom.

But now if we grow fenfless and stupid, secure and obdurate under the Patience of God. do we not basely pervert it? Instead of a thankful Refenting of his Favour, and studying how to make it turn to the Glory of his Name, as well as our own Eternal Happiness, to do him the more Dishonours for his Clemency: This is vile indeed! Do we thus requite the Lord, and his Goodness! So a reprieved Thief will sometimes cut his Throat that fav'd him from the Gallows. This is the Spirit of Impenitence under God's Forbearance: Our Eye is the more evil because God is good. The Apostle could not think of this Management, but his Indignation rose to the utmost: Shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may abound? God forbid: A detested Thought to him which he was unspeakably moved to hear suggested: And indeed one wou'd think it might frike the hardest Heart with Horror: The Devils have not this Spear in their Consciences, and it is wonderful how we can bear it in ours.

The Ninevites were led by their natural Light to make this Use of the Forbearance of God, even to turn from their Sins: 'They cou'd put no other Sense on God's delaying the threatned Ruin for forty Days: But how perverse had their Reasoning been, if on the contrary they had encouraged themselves saying, Well, then we have one Month more to sin in, and we'll take our fill in it! Yet thus we in effect do daily.

The affectionate Voice of the Divine Forbearance to us is, O Sinner, Repent once at length, for why will you dye? Have I any Pleasure at all in your Death? O that thou knewest, at least in this thy day, the things of thy Peace! How shall I give thee up! My Bowels are troubled: How both to execute the serceness of my Anger! But the sleepy Soul attends not nor hears: The Pity and Tears of a gracious Father over him, move him not: In despite to all he goes on to grieve and dishonour him more and more? And what greater Aggravation of Sin can there be? He that is hardned against Goodness, must sink crush'd under the Hand of

Justice.

3. It is a very finful Thing to lofe, waste and throw away Time and all our Talents. Thefe were not given us to do nothing with, or to expend on our Lufts. Time is a precious Season, every Moment of which shou'd be carefully busbanded and redeemed; by observing the Seasons of particular Duries, and doing 'em therein, by embracing all Occasions of doing Good; and as our Days are flying, the Present must have fomething done in it with an Eye to Eternity. It is the Talent of all that live, he that has but one, has this, though indeed there are none but who have more than one committed to them. But how does he improve his Time and Life, that Slumbers and Sleeps? Truly not at all, or very ill: Time is loft to a Man afleep: There may be Dreams of Pleasure, or Gains and Honour; but really he neither fees nor does any good. Thus is the very End of our Being frustrated: God has no Service and Glory from us, we feem made in vain, we cumber the Earth, are so many warts on the Face of Nature, Blains and Sores on the Places and Societies we live in, our Bodies so much proud Flesh, and our Souls the Corruption

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ruption under it. So that Sleep must be our Sin, unless we can think that God has made us, and fent us into the World to do nothing at all.

I said before, we have many Talents: If we loiter and are negligent, all are loft; God has not the least Tribute of Honour from all his Gifts. So the Expence on a Prodigal's Education is intirely thrown away; just as the liberal Expences of Providence on those that have happy Advantages to no Purpose. And if no Good come of the Bounty of God to us, no doubt but there will much Evil. His Corn, and his Wine, and his Oil will be prepared for Baal; one Idol Lust or other will be served by them, some hated mortal Enemy of God be cherish'd, an unnatural War against Heaven maintain'd by its own bounteous Loans and Gifts, the Mercies of God turned against him, and made Weapons of wherewish to wound his bleffed Name. So that we shall not be able to make the sotbful Servant's Plea, without lying, as he indeed did, when he dug up his buryed Talent, and presenting it to his Lord, told him, Lo, there thou baft that is thine: For alas, the Rust had eat Part of it, and a great deal had been fquandred away in confumptive Lufts, and much of it stoln by the Enemy while he flept. But supposing it were intire, as we receiv'd it, yet wou'd not that be accepted; there ought to be an Increase made of it, That I might have received mine own with Ulury, Tays the Parable, Take therefore the Talent from him, and cast the unprofitable Servant into outer Darkness .-

4. Slumber and Sleep is feen to be very finful by its deadning Effects: it indisposes and disables for after-duties: The Hands forget to labour through Difuse; the Spirits are impaired and loft, by over-much Sleep: Sloth stupisies and weakens

weakens too; we can neither discern our Way, nor do our Work with Strength and Vigour. It foon contracts an habitual Liftlessness and Inactivity, which infenfibly increases Day by Day. We tye our own Hands, and shackle our Feet. Heartlessness and Stupidity are the Twins it goes with. It puts both God and Man off with pitiful Shifts and Excuses: The Spouse did but sumber, and yet could not rife, tho' she heard her Lord's Voice, and knew it, * I have put off my Coat, bow hall I put it on? &c. And it unfits for Acts of Charity to Man, as much as Piety to God; as he in the Parable answers his importunate Friend, Trouble me not now, the Door is hut, and my Children are with me in Bed, I cannot rife and give thee t.

This cursed Quality, and baneful Fruit of spiritual Security, demonstrate it to be very Evil; a noxious Root that kills all the Good it comes nigh. Not only is it the Image of Eternal Death, but the first Fruits of it; what prepares

for it, and haftens it on apace.

5. And lastly, to shut up the Argument, it seems to infer either Discontent, Eye-service, or that we think Life too long to devote to God.

r. Does it offend us that the Bridegroom tarries? Wou'd we prescribe to him, and have him at our beck, and submit to our Censure? Wou'd we be Judges of the Times and Seasons which the Father has reserved secret to himself? Shall we correct the Decrees of God, or be his Counsellors to teach him! May he not determine the Duration of his own Works, what Age the World shou'd have, and what the Life of Man! But this exceeding Pride and insufferable Arrogance is not to be supposed possible in

^{*} Cant. 5. 3. + Luk. 11. 7.

Creatures: Surely we do not fleep away the Day of God's Forbearance in Julien Discontent, faulting his Ordering of the Duration of Things.

2. It carries the Face of Eye-Service. The Lord delayeth his coming, and we feem to think him at a Distance, and grow bold to loiter: As there are many idle Servants, who will be diligent for long as the Master is in Sight, but let him turn his Back and there is nothing done. 'Tis this same fordid Spirit to excuse Sloth, by the Bridegroom's tarrying. Were he in Sight we should bestir our selves, cou'd we see him looking on us thro' some Casement from the Skies, we shou'd keep to our Work. But surely we fansie him to be some earthly Master, gone away into a far Country, who can know nothing of our good or ill Behaviour, Diligence or Lazines, in his Absence. Insidelity lies at the Bottom, We walk by Sight and not by Faith, and want the Saviour's bodily Presence to over-awe us to Diligence in our Work.

3. Or do we think Life too long to be devoted to God, that so much of it is spent in Slumber. A mighty Matter truly, to devote a short Life of three or fourfcore Years, to the Honour of the Infinite God! Can any whit less than Eternity suffice for him, or comport to the Infifinite Glories of his Nature and Relations to us! Throughout all Duration we can never do enough for him who gave us Being, who made us for his own Glory, and for the Glories and Felicities of Immortality! We can never answer our Obligations refulting from his Benefits towards us; nor ever love and ferve him as we ought, i. e. according to the infinite Demands of his Effential Glory: But because we have no infinite Returns to make, being Creatures and finite, therefore we must give him our best Eternally;

nally; if it were possible to make up in Duration what is deficient in Weight and Quality.

How much less can it be ever thought enough to bring the poor Offerings of fallen Creatures, in a State of Poverty, and mixt with such Infirmity and Sin, that it is wholly of soveraign Grace that they can ever be accepted! Can the best Life of a frail imperfect Creature be too goodly an Oblation, that we seem to grudge and steal from it!

And after all, What is your Life - but a Vapour? jour Days - but a Span long? And your Years are as nothing before him. Can you not watch with me one Hour? Not spend so short a Life in God's Service, without weariness and loitering? What, grudge the Labours of Twenty or Thirty Years? What if we had our seven and nine Hundred Years to live, as they before the Flood? They thought it all little enough, and enough happily spent in walking with God: Much less should we be willing to lose a Moment of our short Life. Sloth is without any pretence of Excuse in our Case; for we are like Labourers sent into the Vineyard when there are but a few Hours of the Day remaining, we have not the whole Length and scorching Heat of it before us; for Shame then let not us loiter, who begin but in the Shadows and cool of the Evening.

But I lose my self in this Maze of Folly and Sin, The Slumbrings of the wifest Virgins. The Use

of this awful Meditation is,

t. To convict and deeply abase us before God. For how often are we guilty in this Point, and there's not a sleepy Frame that comes upon us at any time but it is our Sin. Yet there is not a Day passes, and less a Sabbath, but you may charge your selves with, and see Cause enough to complain of and lament your Dulness and Coldness in N 2

those Duties, wherein there ought most of all to be Life and Vigour. How feldom do we watch as we shou'd against Temptations? How often do we quench the Spirit, stifle Conviction, and trifle with Ordinances? How many are our Falls, and how feldom are we duly fenfible of 'em? Do not many fit under the loud and earnest Calls of the Word, and pass under many speaking Providences without any Sense and Feeling? We sleep on in smooth Way and in rough, whether left on our Feather-beds, or thrown off on craggy Rocks; yet we fleep on: but not without great guilt, not without great contempt and injury done to the Goodness and Authority of God. Let us be ashamed of our Folly, and forry for our Sin, and affrighted at our Danger. You remember the bitter Tears of holy Men after their Security, such become us after the Infensible Life which we have too much led.

2. Be much in Prayer for the Grace of God to quicken and preserve you. A Petition always proper and necessary to be in the Mouths of Men given to slumber. The most lively Saints have always made it, ever needing more Life in Duties. The Psalmist abounds in it, * Quicken us and we will call upon thy Name; quicken me in thy Way, in thy Righteousness, after thy Loving-kind-

ness; quicken me for thy Name Sake.

And we ought also to pray that the Life, and all Degrees of Grace from time to time given, may be preserved: That God who is able, wou'd the keep us from falling, that, being sanctified by God the Father, we may be presented in Christ: that being delivered from every evil Work, we may be preserved to his heavenly Kingdom. The Sense of the fore-

^{*}Pf.lm 119. 25, 37, 50, &c. 80. 18. † Jude v. 1, & 24. 2 Tim. 4. 18.

argued Folly and Sin of Slumbring, shou'd make us incessant in this Prayer to God, for his continual Presence and Insluence: And so far as we are made to know and feel the Power of God exerted in helping us, let us be infinitely sensible of and thankful for his Compassion and Grace displayed towards us, and in us: || And let our

Trust in him be strengthened.

3. Let it be a Summons and Alarm to every secure, insensible Sinner: * It is high time to awake out of Sleep. How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard! What Days and Nights too consumed thus! And Years too successively! Shall old Age pass away after Youth and Manhood, in one continued Dream, and thy whole Life be found no better, when you awake in Eternity? Are your Sins too sew yet, or the Days of Life yet to come too many? Surely the time past may suffice to have wrought the Lusts of the Flesh! Wou'd God there were but as much left for Him and thy Soul, and that it may be as diligently improved! Awake then to Righteousness and sin not; the Night is far spent; let us cast off the works of Darkness.

And yet through the Riches of Mercy, it is not too late to awake now. Life lasts, the Means of Awaking are continued; your Eyes see your Teachers; they are not clos'd in Death: While there's Life there's Hope, and especially while the Means of Life are used: Nor can it ever be too late for God to work, who calls some at the Eleventh Hour, † and yet gives em the same Penny, the same Heaven in Reward of their short and poor Work, which he does to others who have wrought longer in the Vineyard. Known unto him are all his Works from the Beginning to the End; and where he has a Purpose of Grace;

[|] Pfal. 71. 20. Eph. 2. 4. 10. * Rom. 13. 11. Prov. 6. 9.

the Degrees of Sin, nor the Length of thy Course, shall be no Obstruction. For, who Commanded the Light out of total Darkness? And who the Waters to gush out of the flinty Rock? And who is it, that calls Things that are not as tho they were? And whose Voice will awake them that fleep in the Dust of the Earth another Day? Does not the Lord all these Things? Be it then. that our Congregation were but a Heap of dry Bones, and those too in their Graves (as the Prophet fays of the whole house of Israel |) yet may there be a Refurrection, - I will open their Graves: In which Faith it is, I prophesie over you and say, Hear the Word of the Lord: and as I prophesied there was a Noise, and behold a Shaking, &c. Then let us take the Summons this Day; the Lord whom we think tarrying, stands at the Door and knocks: Awake thou that fleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ (hall give thee Life (a).

4. And laftly, Redeem the Time foolifhly loft in past Slumbers, by double Diligence for the future. You Thou'd have taken time by the fore-lock, it can't be recall'd, 'tis bald behind. Have you flept away to Day, then redeem to Morrow, let not a Sand more run to no purpose. Revenge upon thy felf thy past Sloth; redeem, out of natural Sleep, Hours for Prayer and Meditation: (b) Wake before the Morning Watch to praise him, prevent the Dayuning of it, to cry to him. Make that lazie Heart do Penance for its past Ease: Forbid those closing Eyes, let Tears for past guilty Slumbers now keep 'em open; and bow those Knees to the hard Floor in Prayers, which have so long lain stretcht (as it were) on a Bed of Down: Up and be doing: Live fast to make up for lost time : Say with him, * Seven times a Day will I

Eph. 5. 14. (b) Pfal. 147, 148. * Pfalm 55. 17. 119, 164.

praise

maise thee; Evening and Morning and at Noon will I pray, and cry atoud, and he shall hear my Voice. Seek Opportunities of doing good, and with all possible Application fer thy felf in every Capacity, with all thy Faculties and Powers, to pleafe

and glorifie God. a same a took adjunting

Live therefore in the abiding Apprehension of your Lord's Coming. Realize that awful Day. Faith, but as a Grain of Mustard-seed, in actual Exercise, wou'd keep the Heavens opening, and your Lord descending: It hears the Trump of God, and fets us a trimming our Lam'ts. Only believe, and Sleep will depart from your Eyes. Faith makes the Day of Christ and of Death certain, speedy, and peradventure sudden.

Certain it is. + I know that he will bring me to Death, and to the House appointed for all living. Behold be cometh in Clouds, and every Eye shall fee bin.

And this Day is speedy: | Surely I come quickly: And how far shall our Death out-run that?

But how faddenly we may be call'd off, God only knows; in whole Hand our Times are, and it is a Secret in his Breaft when 'the Decree will be feeled, and the Commandment come forth; only this we know, it will be punctually executed, and must be yielded to; I There's no Difehorge in that War, and no Man bath Power in that Day of Death to retain the Spirit. We know that the Day of the Lard shall come as a Thief in the Night, to the terrible Surprize of a Sleeping World; and the Arrow of Death, as Subtle Lightning, may firike e'er tis feen. and adpoint aver sent

Let us then be wakeful and waiting all the Days of our appointed Time, till our Change comes * The end of all Things is at hand, be ye therefore for beniand matchiante Prayer, on od neo eredi ficel

¹ Job 30. 23. Marth. 26. 68. Rev. 1. 3. Rev. 1. 20. MATTH.

MATTH. XXV. 6.

And at midnight there was a cry made, behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

N our last we left all the Virgins slumbring and sleeping, the Wife as well as the Foolish; but how foon are they awaken'd with Fright and Surprize enough, and effectually convinc'd that it was a very frivolous and unreasonable Pretence upon which they had remitted of their Watch before, scil. because the Bridegroom tarried: For they have not slept long but Lo, be comes! They had but one Hour or two to have watch'd when they betook themselves to Sleep; and it had fav'd 'em the Pain as well as Hazard of a fearful Surprize, had they had the Patience and Grace to have wak'd a little, little longer. Our whole Life is as it were but One Day, which has its Dawn in Infancy, and its High Noon at Manhood, and then declines apace, till at best in Old Age it fets in Death. We are call'd to watch but One short Day, yet most Men sleep away the whole of it, turn it into Night, and the Noon of Life is Midnight with them.

meant here by Midnight? There have been those that have thought that Christ will really come to Judgment in the Middle of the Night, and it has been taught as a piece of Apostolical Tradition; but its likely groundlessly enough; at least there can be no such Conclusion drawn from this Parable, which is only an Allusion to the Usages of the Days wherein it was utter'd

in their Marriages. Passing then the strict and proper Sense of the Word, let us fix the Meta-phorical Sense, and the Spiritual Signification of it.

At Midnight. In the midst of Sin, say some, which is Spiritually to be called Our Night, and in Scripture is often, * the State of Darkness,

and the Deeds of Darkness.

A Time of Trouble and Affliction, say Others; for then the Soul is said to sit in Darkness, and

be cover'd with Darkness +.

Again, Midnight is the Time of Security and Sleep, destin'd to Rest, and a Forgetsulness of the Toils of the Day. || They that sleep, sleep in the

Night.

Finally, It is the Time of deep Silence as well as Sleep, wherein a loud Cry is heard further than in the Day, and strikes People with more Horror; as we know by the doleful Cry of Fire in the Night; in what Fright and Confusion do we rise? Which nothing can so perfectly describe as Eliphaz's Vision (a), or the borrid Outcry of Egypt (b), which are both of 'em a lively Representation of the Horrors which attend any surprizing Accident in the Night. And this is the Sense I wou'd fix on the Hour specify'd, which points us to the inexpressible Consternation that Security in Sin will expose Men to as Death advances, as a sudden Out-cry at Midnight is doubly amazing.

2. There was a Cry made! What is meant by this (xquiyn, Clamor) Out-cry? The Word imports a Cry loud and vehement, like the Noise at some great and dreadful Accident. It is used of the confused Clamours of a Quarrel (c), also of

Eph. 5. 11. 1 Jo. 2. 9, 11. † 112 Pfalm 4. 97. 11. | 1 Theff. 5. 7. (a) Job 4. 13, 14. (b) Exod. 12. 30. (c) Acts 23. 9.

the frong Cries of inflam'd Devotion (d), and of the loud Cry of the Angel with the (harp Sickle (e). Some wou'd understand this of the Word Preached, the Voice of the Ministers of the Gospel. who cry aloud and spare not, to warn us of Death and the Eternal Judgment. Others equally interpret it (and indeed with equal reason) of God's Voice in Afflictive Providences; when he crieth unto the City. But it feems plain by the whole Scope of the Parable, to be meant of the Call of Death, or the Last Trumpet's Sound: when (as Calvin on the Place fays) the whole Machine of the World, the whole Frame of Nature, shall resound and eccho to the Angels Voice, which shall shake open Mens Graves, as well as awake 'em on their Beds. Wishing

3. And this determines what the Bridegroom's Coming means: Which we may equally understand of his Second Appearance to judge the World, or of the Summons of Death, which Hour is dark as Midnight to every sleepy Sinner, and an astonishing Call to him to go meet his Lord. Both come to one, for Death calls us away to our particular Judgment, and as that finds us, so will the general one most assuredly. (That Christ will come at the Last Day in quality of a Bridegroom to his Redeemed, I have already shown on the First Verse of the Parable.)

4. And lastly, You may easily perceive from hence, what is meant by our being bid to go out and meet him. Some wou'd understand it as a Command and Exhortation to be always preparing for his Coming; but I take it only to be a Summons—Now, immediately to appear before our Judge, to give up our Account, and

⁽d) Heb. 5.7. (e) Rev. 14. 15.

receive our Doom. So much Time as this Summons shall leave us for Preparation, so far 'tis a Call unto us to prepare; but it may be the Time for that is wholly past before the Summons comes. And whereas it is said in the following Verse, that the Virgins all arose and trimmed their Lamps, it only seems to me to mean, what is very common and proper when Death does really approach, the more than ordinary Care which the Best of Men do seel, that their Judge may find them not only habitually but actually ready, in a meet present Frame of Soul as well as State.

Having thus open'd the Words, I shall offer Two Observations from them. 1. That the Coming of Christ to Judgment, or the Summons of Death whereby he calls us to it, will be sull of Consternation to all those whom it shall surprize in Security. 2. That be the Consternation and Anguish of the secure Sinner never so great, yet go he must at this Summons. Go ye out to

meet him.

ment, or our Summons to go to our Judge by Death, will be full of Consternation to them whom it shall surprize in Security. At Midnight there was a Cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh. Here are Three Particulars, 1. That our Lord will come again. 2. That his Coming will surprize most Men in Security. 3. That such a Surprize will be full of Consternation.

Sense of the Parable, is to say, That Death and Judgment will do so: Our Lord will one Day call for us, and we must appear before Him. But need I run into the copious Proofs that there will be a Judgment-Day, that Christ will be the Judge, and how he will be revealed?

In what Majesty, Power, Splendour! Tho' the Parable wou'd bear me out, and may seem to call for these Inlargements, yet they wou'd require a Volume by themselves, and are excellently done to our Hand by the best Pens of the Age ||. I will therefore briefly pass over these

noble Arguments, by faying,

That the Scripture every where informs us that the Dead shall be judged (a), That the Judgment Seat is Christ's. That God bath appointed a Day in the which be will judge the World in Righteoulnels by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof be bath given Assurance unto all Men in that he hath raised bim from the dead. The Father judgeth no Man, but bath committed all Judgment unto the Son, that all Men should bonour the Son even as they bonour the Father. This was the Consolatory Promife of the Ascending Saviour, I will come again: This was the Hope of the Promise made of God unto the Fathers, on which the Soul of every Saint stays, and his longing Heart answers, Even for come Lord Fesus! This is also threatned to Wicked Men, in Words terrible, like the Thing it felf, to them. Enoch prophecy'd of his Coming with Ten thousand of his Saints, to execute Judgment, &c. Our Lord told the High-Priest, and those that murder'd him, that they should see the Son of Man on the right hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven: Which he has repeated again from Heaven fince his Ascension, Behold, he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see bim, and they also which pierced him, and all Kindreds of the Earth shall wail because of him: Even so, Amen.

[|] Dr. Bates and Others on Death and Judgment. (a) Dan.
12. 2. Pial. 96. 13. Ecclef. 12. 14. Jude ver. 14. Rev.
20. 12. Matth. 16. 27. 25. 33. John 5. 22, 26. Acts
16. 42. 17. 31. 2 Cor. 5. 10, 6.6.

So then the Saint may not doubt, nor can the Sinner question the Coming of the Day of Christ; which is in Scripture called emphatically, That Day, The Day of God, and The Great

Day (a).

2. The Summons of Death, and the Call to Judgment, will surprize most Men in Security. At Midnight was the Cry made, while the Virgins were securely slumbring and sleeping in their Beds. So will the Second Coming of Christ be, which he has expressly assured and warn'd us of, comparing it to the Days of Noah and of Lot (b), They knew not till the Flood came and took them all away, till the Storm of Fire fell and destroy'd them all: Even so shall it be in the Day when the Son of Man is revealed.

And it is too sensible a Truth to be deny'd, That Death frequently furprizes Men in their Slumbers and Security. It is a compaffionate Sight to behold the Fears, and Shame, and Sorrow of Good Men themselves as Death draws nigh. Tho' they are not in utter Despondencies, yet they appear furpriz'd: they bewail their Slackness in their Preparations, their too frequent Slumbers, and, alas, that even now they were found too much off their Watch. Their Lamps are not quite gone out, yet they need a gteat deal of trimming; they have burnt but faintly; and as to actual Readiness they are much behind hand, tho' the Habit and Principle of Grace be in them. Their anxious and busy Minds shew their Surprize, and that they have more to do than to die.

But infinitely more melancholy is it to fee Wicked Men fnatch'd away in their Sins. And

⁽a) 1 Thest. 5. 4. 2 Pet. 3. 12. Phil. 2. 16. Jud. ver. 6. (b) Matth. 24. 37, 38, 39. Luke 17. 28, 29, 30.

that not only in Storms and Battels, where Scores and Thousands fink or fall together; but those that die at Home, in their Beds, and in the Arms of their Friends, their Candle is blown out with a Puff; to Some not a Day, to Others a poor short Week or two is granted, the greatest part of which the Man is buoy'd up with Hopes of a Recovery, and does not really think himself dying till the last Hour or two, when in meer Mercy and Despair of Life together he is told so, and then, as he can under the Agonies of Death, he has a few broken Breaths to cry for his Soul in. How do they then lament their Surprize, turning their Faces to the Wall in Tears, and deploring their past Sloth, Stupidity, and Thoughtlefness of their Souls and Eternity. In what Anguish do they confess this, expressing Astonishment at, and Resentment against themfelves, beyond what any Words can describe.

But the Demonstration of this Truth lies in this, that the most do finally miscarry; therefore for certain most are found sleeping. Few are found wakeful and watching, for sew are saved; For blessed to be sure are those Servants whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching—and if he come in the second Watch, or come in the third Watch, and find them so, blessed are those Ser-

vants (a).

The Reasons of so common a Surprize in so wretched a Security are, Men seldom think of Dying till they are forc'd to it by Sickness or Age. They put the Thought off till the very Point of the Javelin is at their Breast. They know indeed they are to die, and that Judgment follows at its Heels, but they promise themselves a Morrow to repent in, and the Will

⁽a) Matth. 24. 47. Luke 12. 37, 38.

and Power to do it too; and so they dally Day after Day, till their End actually come, and they have not begun any thing of the Good they have been purposing and deferring all their Life long. This is the common Case of Men,

and the least that follows from it is,

3. That a Dying Hour is full of Darkness and Consternation to them. As dark as Midnight, which admits not one gleam of Light; and as dreadful as the Horror of a Surprize then. greatens little Evils before-hand, and when they come it is a pleasant Mistake to find them small ; whereas Security leffens great Evils, and when they come they look terrible and amazing. Our Lord has told us how afforithing the Last and Great Day will be to the fecure World, who will be found eating and drinking, marrying and making merry. As they Tay Peace, Peace, Sudden Destruction shall come, as Travail on a Weman with Child (b). The Sinner can never fleep on in the last Throws of Nature, as to him those dire Convulsions are already come, while his Death-bed shakes under him: The Sun non Moon are light to him no more, but become black and as Blood, the Heavens depart as a Scrowl, and the Earth removes out of its Place. And when all Nature is in a Fit and expiring, no wonder if all Hands be faint, and every Heart melt; if Pangs take hold of them, and their Faces become as Flames; Mens Hearts failing them for fear, and for looking for those amazing Things that are coming on them.

So grim and frighting is Death found to fecure Souls, its Vifage very terrible, which they fly from with appaled Faces, but finding no Escape, they lie down and bite the Ground in

⁽b) i Theff. 5. 3. Rev. 6. 15, 16, 17.

Rage and Despair, or once at last in their mortal Fears look to a forgotten God and Saviour.

The Reasons are many, why such a Surprize must needs put a secure Sinner into the greatest Consternation. 1. The Man's Sins all come together in one View, and a formidable Army they are in Order and Array against him, a long and black Catalogue which the Guilty Man trembles to read, and more to answer for before his Judge. He seems to Himself a most hideous and loathsom Creature, wou'd sty from the ugly Form that haunts him, and guilty Fears show him all manner and degrees of Misery before him.

2. At the Approach of Death Conscience recovers Sense and Liberty. The Judge that has slept so long on the Bench awakes then, and reviewing the ill-spent Life passes Sentence before-hand. The Worm begins to gnaw, and the Fire that has been long kindling in the Breast breaks out, and, like a Flame long pent in, with great Violence. And there needs no more Torment than to have our own Hearts inrag'd and let loose upon us: They tear and rend as a Lion, and give insufferable Pain. A wounded

Spirit who can bear?

3. Advancing Death shews Hell open to the Wicked. He has the Second Death before him, and at last apprehends what the Wrath of God is, and what an Eternal Separation from Him. And now the Sinner in Sion is afraid, Fearfulness surprizes the Hypocrite! Who among us can dwell with devouring Fire? who can live with everlasting Burnings? The brink of Eternity is very terrible to awake on: As I remember Dr. Lucas tells of a soft sensual Epicurean drawing night he last Hour of his Life,—Ab Eternity! said he, setting his Teeth, and darting wild distracted Looks

on those about him, Ab Eternity! he cry'd, and stop'd. 'He neither cou'd, nor needed he to fay more, for by this one Word he laid open all those dismal Thoughts and gloomy Fears which harrass'd his departing Soul. Such Examples are for our Warning, that Security do not bring on us also the same Anguishes of De-

spair ere long.

4. And what heightens the Confusion of an unlook'd for Summons is, That a mighty Work appears to be done, and no Time left to do it, nor any Power. To repent on a Death-bed, is a thing, I fear, very rare, and the extraordinary Work of God. The Thief on the Cross is but a single Instance, and in a very peculiar Minute he own'd Christ, when scarce any of his Followers durst do it. Our crying, Lord, remember me, will not sound in the Ears of Christ

as this dying Confessor's did.

Besides, that we can't repent of our selves, nor change our own Hearts when Death comes on, no more than we can do it now; We shall moreover find many Natural Impediments which do not now lie upon us. What with Bodily Weakness, and an Ebb of the Spirits; and what with Soul-wounding Shame and Fears, there is a Super-added Impotency to any Spiritual Duty. At the Moment when his Soul need have all his Care, the wretched Body asks to be thought of first. Conscience may gripe, but the Body's Ails calls the Man off from attending to its Voice. The Thought is broken, and Prayer gives way to the Groans of Nature. There wants Time and Sedateness of Mind for Recollection, and to deliberate what is to be done in the prefent Juncture. He that has but a Minute or two left to do the Work of the whole Life in, must, without a Miracle, be in such Confusion and Tumult, as to do nothing at all orderly. Besides, that desponding Fear and Shame may allow him no Face to look up to God, nor Hope

in doing fo.

5. Satan will be ready enough to fet in and terrify the Soul. His Malice makes this a Sport to him. As he tempts to fin now, so it grudges him till the Time come when he may upbraid the Wretches whom he beguiles, and yet not lose his Hold of 'em. He wou'd be glad to have every Sinner's Hell begin on Earth, supposing he should lose no Souls by it: If he can't stupify, he will try to make desperate: Our Mi-

fery pleases him as well as our Sin.

Many frightful Goblins haunt the Shades of Death. We hear Good People complain of a bufy Devil annoying them, feeking to drive them from every Promife, and accusing them of infolent Presumption in taking Sanctuary in them: but to many he may declare his Claim without a Lie, — Wretch! thou hast served none but me in thy Life, and thou art mine, and I stand ready to seize thy Soul. Or suppose the Man knows for certain without the Devil's telling him, that he has liv'd a prophane and impenitent Life to this very Day wherein he is call'd to die.

6. And lastly, How justly may the Holy God send down a Sense of his Wrath to awaken the stupid Soul? He finds him his Enemy now, whom he has always in his Life-time treated as such. And if God shoot an Arrow into his Soul, or let one scalding Drop fall upon him, is there any living or subsisting under it? Can Good Men bear up under the hiding of his Face, and shall the Ungodly under the Weight of his Hand? If David was made to roar out, who had Courage not to fear, and Strength to slay,

flay, the Lion and the Bear, and the monstrous Philistine more formidable than either, what Outcries will weaker Souls utterly for aken make? Thy fierce Wrath goeth over me, thy Terrors cut me off.

Us E. I shall briefly improve this ferious Truth, for the Consolation of Good Men, and

the Awakening of the Wicked.

To Believers there is nothing of Consternation in the Summons of Death, and the Thoughts of Judgment, if fo be they fee their Interest in their Redeemer. It is good News to them, however distressing to others. The Bridegroom cometh-The Lord from Heaven, who stands in this dear and facred Relation to you. What is this Midnight Cry to you, but that He whom you love, and to whom you have given your felf for ever, is come to fetch you Home in State and Glory, to Heavenly Mansions, to the House Eternal, not made with Hands. Let the Shades gather never fo thick, it is however your Wedding Night. You may look up and fay, This is my Friend and my Beloved. Let them fear that are Strangers and Enemies to him, let those repine and gnash with their Teeth, and melt away: but let the Friends of the Bridegroom rejoyce at his Voice (a); it is the Day of his Joy and of the Saints, Go forth, O ye Daughters of Zion, and behold your King, crowned—as in the Day of his Espousals, and in the Day of the Gladness of his Heart (b). So does a desolate affectionate Spouse welcome a long absent Husband at his Return, running to his Arms with Transport, and dying away there in excess of Joy.

⁽a) John 3. 29. (b) Cant. 3. 11.

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But let Wicked People improve it for their Terror and Awakening. You are stupid now, but may look for Fright enough quickly. The dear Name, the Bridegroom, will lose its Sweetness, and be more terrible than the Voice of a Stranger. The Relation might have been, and visibly has been, but now forfeited and lost for ever. What does the Name mind thee of, but thy Treachery, Injustice, and Deferts? The Punishment which Perfidy and Disloyalty calls for! What shou'd you expect but Jealousy and Fury in his Face, and Revenges equal to his Refentments? What should he come to you for, but to avenge Himfelf and his Holy Covenant for the foul Abuses you have done him. I will judge thee as Women that break Wedlock, and give thee Blood in Fury and Fealousy (c). We know how a lewd Woman fears the Presence of a wrong'd inrag'd Husband, and if drag'd before him, what Confusion wou'd cover her? More confounded will the Treacherous Professor be at the Sight of Christ, his Holy Saviour.

Next to the Eternity of Blessedness in the full Enjoyment of Christ in Glory, this is to be most desired, the Joys and Honours of the Justified in the Last Day; and next to this, the greatest Happiness is Peace and good Hope in the Hour of Death: But if we hope for either of these great Mercies, we must be awake and at work now, and diligently improve the Means which God has instituted and bless'd for the keeping us awake, and making us diligent. And suffer me to digress so far as to recommend a constant and serious Attendance on the Holy Supper of Christ, as a necessary and efficacious Mean thereunto. (d) A Mean it is to prevent sinful Slumbers, and to

⁽c) Ezek. 16. 38. (d) Being juß before the Communion.

affift unto a constant Watch: The Neglect and the Profanation of this Ordinance lose Men their Spiritual Powers. He that comes slumbring hither, may well have his Senses the more lock'd up, his Eyes fastned; a Righteous Thing with God to do: And he that regards not the Holy Ordinance, so as never to attend it, seems for that reason to be asleep already; Conscience is not so awake, nor the Man's Eyes so open, as to see his Duty in one grand and important Instance of it. But the Worthy Receiver, whom God has awaken'd, takes the best Course to keep himself so, by frequenting the Holy Table of Christ. Let me therefore observe,

1. That a careless Neglect of the Lord's Table, which is the common and crying Sin of this Land, is a Sign, That Christ, and his Coming, or our going to him, are much out of Mind. This lively Admonition of the Death of our Lord, and his Second Appearance, is no ways pleasing to us. We are willing to forget the Person and Thing, whose Memorial we shun, which shou'd bring them to Remembrance. Here are many Christians that appear scarce ever to think of Christ: Do they not strangely forget themselves? as Men asleep, and quite out of their Senses. One reason why Men neglect the Lord's Table is, Because they seldom, if ever, think of the Coming of Christ to Judgment: And one reason why Death and Judgment do no more employ Mens Minds is, Because the Lord's Table is no more frequented, or no more worthily than it often is.

2. A holy and meet Observance of the Communion of the Lord's Table, does greatly help to prepare Men for the Coming of Christ. It keeps us waking, and increases our Vigour and Activity in Spiritual Duties. Not only has God commanded the Bleffing here, but the Nature of the Ordinance carries in it a particular Defign and Tendency to prepare us for Death and

Judgment. As,

plain Admonition to us, that we must die. For if the Son of God, in our Flesh, did so, shall we plead Exemption? In Him we see Humane Nature dead, the very Curse of the Law suffilled in Him, which is much more than to behold a single Humane Person lie dead before us; for in Him our common Nature was obedient to Death. Which Death, when we see shewn forth, can it possibly escape our Mind, that we must die also? and consequently ought to live in habitual Preparation.

2. The very Words of Institution name the Lord's Second Coming: for thus they run—
As often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show the Lord's Death till be come. We avow our Belief that He is risen, that He lives for evermore, and will come again in Power and great Glory. This is one Head for our devout Meditations, both Before we go to the Table of Christ, and At it. And therefore frequent Communions have this Tendency to keep us appre-

Henfive of his Coming.

3. The Lord's Supper represents it as the Coming of the Bridegroom. A meet Shadow of the Matriage-Supper of the Lamb: It being a renewing our Contract and Espousal to Christ, and dressing our Souls against his Coming.

4. It is moreover a Pledge to Us, that He lives, and will come again. We receive new Securi-

ties from Christ, that He will do fo.

5. While we are making Preparation for the Lord's Supper, we do so likewise for Death and Judgment, seil. while we are examining into our Spiri-

Spiritual State, and renewing our Repentance, and imploring the Spirit of Grace to fanctify and preserve us, and grant us all needful Affistances in Duty. The Ordinance admonishes us unto that Circumspection and Watchfulness which wou'd effectually prevent our being found

at last in Security.

6. And lattly, There are great Reasons for our Consternation if we are found sleepy, slothful, secure at the Lord's Table. I do not say the Hazard is equal, as if Death and Judgment find us fo, because there may be Time for After-Repentance, tho' that is not certain neither: But this Every one knows, that in fuch a Cafe Men eat and drink Judgment to themselves: And when Men do fo, and are not feiz'd with that Consternation which they will be when their Judgment visibly draws on, it is because they do not enough realize Christ with them at his Table, as they will fee him in the Air another Day-. For did the Unworthy Receiver really fee the Bridegroom come in and challenge him, Friend, bow camest thou in hither, not having a Wedding-Garment? wou'd not the Man be Thunderstruck, be dumb, and hang down his Head, and fall a trembling? For the Sentence also is the same, unless he repent, as it will be if Death find him sleeping. Bind him Hand and Foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer Darknels. &c.

You see in how many Respects the Lord's Supper is a Call to, and a Means of, Watchfulness and Diligence, and preventive of, or a Rebuke unto, Sleeping and Loitering.

Let us then, as often as we go to the Table of Christ, prepare our selves to meet our Lord, and stir up our selves to take hold of him. Awake up my Glory! I my self will awake early. Let us realize

realize his Prefence in his Ordinances, and his Glorious Descent another Day: And labour to be found now as you desire to be then. That is, to be sure, not assert Ah, can any come drowing hither! to this Sacred Place! to these tremendous Duties! The Lord forbid it; and awaken us, and quicken us to call upon his Name.

I hope I need not suppose that any can really fleep in Time of Administration of the Lord's Supper; which yet a Minister once told his People that he had feen some of them do: But there may be dull and drowfing Souls in Bodies that are awake. God knows who of us have been afleep, while they should have been preparing their Hearts for this Solemn Approach, and who come heavy and liftless hither: whither none should presume to come, whose Prayer is not against Coldness and Dulness, whose Prayer is not earnest for quickning Grace, that he may be all Life, and Zeal, and Fervour while he is here, and go away invigorated and ftrengthned to serve God better than ever. Sweet and richly profitable are the Ordinances like to be to fuch a lively, active Faith and Love, pregnant with Pleasures and Grace too; serene and bright is his Life and Death like to be; no Midnight Cry is ever like to furprize him who does not fleep as do others, nor ever will he flart or hang back when his Lord calls him, but rejoyce to go; for he has but two Conceptions of the thing, that it is either to go to his House of Worship here, or to Heaven and a better Communion; both which are extreamly defirable to him, but the last more abundantly fo.

The Doctrine is, That be the Surprize and Consternation, the Fear and Anguish of the Secure

cure Sinner never so great when Death or Judgment fummons him, yet go he must at that Summons. The Call is peremptory and absolute. a Command that must be obey'd, the Voice of God's Messenger, and arm'd with his Authority and Power; for so is Death, and so is the Angel with the Trump of God. Go ye out to meet him—We shall be constrain'd to obey, be we never fo unwilling, or how much foever we ftruggle against it. Death will not be said Nay to: He is a grim and ftrong Officer to turn us out of Doors, when God, our Sovereign Proprietor, fays the Word: He is inexorable, and will execute his Commission; the Moans of innocent Babes can beget no Tenderness in him, nor the Fears and Shrieks of blooming Youth, nor will he reverence the Grey Head: He will neither make Supplications to thee, nor Speak Soft Words unto thee; neither will he regard it if thou doest the like to him. What Man is he that livetb and shall not see Death? Shall be deliver his Soul from the Grave? Or can a Man by any means redeem his Brother, or give to God a Ransom for him, that he should still live for ever and not see Corruption? for he seeth that Wise Men die, likewise the Fool and the brutish Person perish (a).

And as Death will not be put off, so neither will the Judgment-Day. There will be no stopping our Ears against the strong Arch-Angel's Voice; Heaven and Earth shall ring at the Sound; Mountains shall shake and cleave, and Rocks shall rend, and Graves shall open, and the Dead hear and come forth (b); tho' the Clods lie close, and the Ashes deep interr'd, yet will the Voice find a Passage thro', and thro' the vast Deeps of

⁽a) Pfalm 49. 7. 89. 48. Job 21. 32, 33. (b) John 5. 28.

the Sea likewife which shall hear and obey and

give up its dead (c).

To return: That we must go when Death calls our Fathers have felt before us : Where are they? do they live for ever? And do we not see many of the same Age and Standing with our felves follow after? Who wou'd fain live longer, and use all the Art and Means imaginable for that End: with eager Eyes they befeech the Physician to do his best, and then turn 'em off to Heaven with eager Cries - O [pare, that I may recover my strength, ere I go bence and be no more: they tell, by a fixed desponding Look on their mourning Friends, how loth they are to part, how unwillingly they put them to all this Sorrow, but there's no Help, no disputing the Right nor resisting the Power of him that calls for us. He who put the Soul into the Body. now remands it out: We live by his Word and Power, and we must needs dislodge and die at his Order. (d) Thou turnest Man into destruction, and fayest, Return ye Children of Men: thou takest away their Breath, they die and return to their Duft. Death is as one under Authority, waiting for and executing the Orders of Christ, who has the Keys of Death; but its Empire is vast, even over the whole Race of Men in all Generations, and it fays to every one in their Order, Go, and he goeth. This is of Right upon the Account of the Divine Soveraignty and Wildom, and of Necessity by reason of the Power, Omniscience, Truth and Justice of God.

r. It is of Right that we shou'd go when Death calls, because of the Soveraignty and Wisdom of

God whose Messenger it is.

1. The Propriety, Dominion and Soveraignty

⁽c) Rev. 20. 13. (d) Pfalm 90. 3. 104. 29, 30.

of God bind us to yield our Nesk unto the Stroke of Death. Like our bleffed Saviour to take the Cup and drink it, faying, Father, if it may not pass from me, thy will be done. So he ascended his Cross, and bowed his Head (in Token of Submission) and gave up the Ghost. If God call it is but for his own, if he command it is his own Vasfal. Behold, be taketh away, who can binder him? (e) Who will fay unto bim, What doeft thou? (f) Shall the Clay Say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? Do we complain that we are Mortal? Pray, who gave us Life at first and upholds us to this Day in Being? Not to add, And who brought Death into the World? Did not Man on himself by bis Sin? May not God do what he will with his own? Does he challenge any Thing that is thine? Dost thou live by thy own Power or Providence? Who shall limit thy Life but he that gave it? And shall he not demand an Account how thou hast spent it? His Talent, his Goods, whereof thou art made a Stewards Are we any more than Tenants at will? Do we pay our great Landlord for his Earth which we possess, his Corn, and his Wine and Oil? His Air which we breathe in, or his gracious Protection which we live fafely under from fear of Evil? Or, has God bound himself to us by any Deed or Instrument? That we shall live always, or longer or shorter in these Bodies? We have been hitherto on meer Bounty, and shall we say we are injur'd to be put out now, to make room for others? If God refolve these Bodies into Dust again, were they not that at first? Formed by his Hand from common Earth, and cast into the Elegant Figure we behold? And if he shou'd. annihilate us wou'd he take any Thing away

⁽e) Job. 9. 12. (f) Ifai. 45. 9.

which he did not first give? He made that string Soul he calls away: he is the God of the Spirits of all Flesh (a); and as such—he orders into what Bodies they shall come, into what Parcels of Flesh; and when, in what Age of the World; and how long every one shall live in, and when leave their Earthly House. In short, the Summons of Death is the Challenge of our Soveraign, and in whose Hand but his shou'd our

Time and Judgment be?

2. The Wisdom of God binds us to Submission to the Call of Death. The Governor of the World is infinitely Wise, and in infinite Wisdom he orders all Things. The Reasons of most of his Providences are hidden and far away out of our sight, as the Counsels of mighty Princes on Earth are from Vulgar Eyes. As Ages roll on some few of the Depths of his Wisdom appear in remarkable Events, which force us to say—How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways

past finding out!

Sometimes our Partiality to our selves makes us to judge his Measures toward us, and sometimes our soolish Charity toward others his Dealings with them. But it is our Ignorance and short Sight that causes both; we see not through our selves nor others, nor know what's best for them or us. One Reason why the Blessed in Heaven do most freely acquiesce in all the Triumphs and Severities of Justice, is because they in a great Measure see into the Reasons of the Divine Government, and discern the Wisdom and Holiness of God in all. And we have a noble Instance in savour of this in the Patriarch Abraham when he was on Earth. God reveal'd to him his Purpose of destroying the impious Ci-

⁽a) Numb. 16. 22.

ties of Sodom : the Holy Man was at first struck with Amazement at the Severity of such a Providence (b), and in a deep Compassion and great Consternation he goes to God, humbly to plead with him, why he wou'd at one Blaft burn up fuch Multitudes together. It is plain that it was his Ignorance that made his Thoughts fo trouble him at the purposed Desolation, and the fame was the cause of his Pity and Sympathy, which he thought to be laudable, holy, and but just in himself, and concluded to be so in God too, whose Compassions infinitely exceed the greatest Tendernesses of any human Breast. But he was foon after let so far into the Secrets of Heaven, as to know that there were not so much as ten Righteous Persons in that vile Place, and that if there had been that poor Number, for their lakes it had not been destroyed. When he heard this, the Text says, Abraham returned unto his place : which may well be thought to import thus much, - He had now no more to fay, he was fatisfied abundantly, and cou'd not but acquiesce in the Determination of God to burn up that corrupt Spot and Club of Men. He returned to his place, adoring, no doubt, that particular Providence which he had had fo many Scruples and Queflionings in his Mind about before. One Beam of Light from Heaven dispel'd the Darkness, and made all that Tragick Scene serene and beautiful in his Eyes. And thus shou'd we do, my Brethren, as to all those Providences which God is daily passing before us in, if we cou'd but see through em: we shou'd admire and worship the Wisdom of God in 'em all, be filent before him, nay, extol him for them.

⁽b) Gen. 18, 23, 33.

For Instance, We think it hard to be called out of the World to Day, or to have others dear to us taken from us, or to part with worthy Persons engaged in great and noble Designs for the Service and Glory of Christ: but cou'd we fee the Reason of all these Things, we shou'd find the Divine Conduct to be the best that can be. We know not to how ill purpose Life prolonged wou'd be to some, and to how much Gain others may die, nor how much Bereavements may be made to turn to our Spiritual Good and lasting Comfort. Nor do we know what Instruments God has to raise up in the room of laborious and zealous, wife and faithful Servants whom he removes, on whom their Spirit may be doubled, as Elijah's upon Elisha; nay, God has fometimes perfected that by the death of an eminent Person which a Nation hop'd for by his Life, as was verified in the Noble Lord Ruffel, as it was his Faith it wou'd be; He was facrific'd to the bloody Thirst of Popery, but his Death stop'd the hafty Advances of it, opening the Nation's Eyes to fee their Danger, and the bloody Nature of the Religion of some at Helm.

But to return, God has his own Glory to confult in our Life or Death: the Glories of his Mercy and of his Justice, and he knows how to make us best subserve to the one if we won't to the other. And when-ever he calls us to die, that Moment shall be most for his Glory. Shall we doubt this as we are slying the Dart? How can we, seeing we know not our selves nor what wou'd be, and how cross the Effects of the Divine Forbearance might be to what we fondly hope and promise of our selves! How shall I answer bim, said Job, and chuse out my words to reason with him? Whom though I were Righteous, yet would

I not answer, but I would make supplication to my

judge (a).

2. Obedience to the Summons of Death is of Necessity, as well as Submission and Acquiescence is of Right. Go we must as well as ought when God calls for us. The Immensity, Power, Truth and Justice of God do call for this. Not but that these Perfections in God are so many Arguments of his Right, and I might have improved em accordingly to prove it; but I content my self only to use em to prove the Necessity that is laid upon us of going when God calls; because there's no slying from his Eye and Presence, nor

withstanding his Power, nor changing his Decree, nor prevailing on his Pity by our Supplications. Were an Escape possible, it must be one of these Ways. Whereas,

1. The Presence and All-seeing Eye of God can't be fled from. Men can't creep into Corners nor under their Beds to hide 'em from Death, nor can the Rocks and Mountains cover them in the Judgment-Day. No Darkness can hide either our Sins or our Persons. No Sanctuary can be found from an Immense Essence: all Refuges fail: Can any bide bimself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth (b)? There is no fleeing from his Spirit, nor from his Hand, though we take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea (c). Though they dig into Hell, thence shall mine Hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring'em down (d).

2. The Power of God is Infinite and can't be refifted. The loftiness of Man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of Men be made low, and the Lord

⁽a) Job 9. 14, 15. (b) Jer. 23, 14. (c) Pfalm 139. 9, 10. (d) Amos 9. 2, 3. Jer. 32, 17.

alone shall be exalted in that Day. It must needs be so unless thou hadst an Arm like God, and couldst Thunder with a Voice like him. He can force thy weak Soul out of the Body at Death, and again into it at the Resurrection. Suppose the wicked Man equally unwilling to both, as I truly believe he will sty one Day from his rising Body as much as he is now loth to leave it; yet the single Word of God will easily command it in again, as it now does out. Our Liking and Consent will no more be ask'd whether we will please to die, than it was at our coming into Being whether we wou'd be born: nor will it be at our Choice whether we will live again and

be judged: God will fee to both.

Let us judge by some other Acts of Divine First, This Power it is that has cast Power. down the Angels that finned, and reserves'em in Chains under darkness to the Judgment of the great Day *. That first Confederacy wou'd have fucceeded if any cou'd. Angels excel in Might, and there were many Legions in this curfed Union, yet they were cast down. And if these Powers of Darkness can't stand before the Power of God, how much less can we? Even they are as unwilling and as fearful as we can be of that terrible Day; they believe it coming and tremble at the thought of it; as the foul Spirit + once quak'd and cry'd out before Christ his Judge, of the inexpressible Torment his Sight gave him, tho' before the time, and in his state of Humiliation. How much less can he be fac'd or withstood when he comes in Power and great Glory? If these accursed Hosts can presume to wage War with Heaven |, yet how shall wretched Worms raise their Crests from the Dust they crawl on, and

^{*} Jude v. 6. † Mark 5. 7. || Rev. 12. 7.

what can the vile Snakes do tho' they his and dart out their poisonous Tongue? What can they do against that Power which crushes Principalities and Powers, and Spiritual Wickednesses? How Potent will the Judge look * with the Key of the bottomless Pit, and a great Chain in his Hand, when he shall lay hold on the Dragon, that old Serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and him, and cast him down, and shut him up, and set a Seal upon him! A much less Instance of the Power of God will it be to cast in after him the Souls, which are but the weak Prey of this sierce Dra-

gon.

Secondly, Is not the whole visible Creation subject to the Power of God? And shall not we? Who bid the Fountains of the great Deep on a time to break loofe and drown the Earth, and they did it? Who bid the Heavens once and again to rain down Fire, and it was fo? Those Clouds which us'd to diftil cool and refreshing Showers! Whose Word do Hail and Snow, Vapour and stormy Wind fulfil? Who shakes the Earth, and touches the Mountains and they smoke? When Ifrael went out of Egypt, who set Sinai a shaking and on Flames? And who bid the Sea open 'em a Passage? (a) The Sea Jaw it and fled, Fordan was driven back: the Mountains skipped like Rams, and the little Hills like Lambs: What ailed thee, O thou Sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Fordan, that thou wast driven back? -Tremble thou Earth at the Presence of the Lord, at the Presence of the God of Jacob! Which turned the Rock into a standing Water, the Flint into a Fountain of Waters. (b) He is wise in Heart and mighty in Strength; who hath hardened himself against him and bath prospered? Who removeth the Mountains and

Rev. 20. 1, 2, &c. (a) Pfalm 114. 3, 4, 5. (b) Job 9 4, 5, 10, 12, 19.

rocks

they know not; who overturneth them in his Anger Who haketh the Earth out of her place, and the Pillars thereof tremble. Who commandeth the Sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the Stars. - Who doeth great things past finding out, yea, and Wonders without number. Behold, be taketh away, who can hinder bim : If I speak of Strength, lo, be is strong; and if of Judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? So gioriously is the Power of God spoken of, and the Obedience which all Nature gives unto his Command. And shall not our Souls rush out of these Bodies at his Call, from which there are so many natural Paffages! Shall not the Tombs throw up our Duft, rending open when Rocks and Mountains do the same? And when our opening Eyes see the great Throne of Light descending, and him on it that comes in Power, shall we not lie groveling in Horrors before him, from whose Face the Earth and the Heavens hall flee away (c)?

Or, Thirdly, Are not the Angels in Heaven both Powerful and Obedient? These may be employed if God pleases, to bring our Souls away unto his Throne, and from thence to cast us down into the Pit. And we know how pun-Aual and severe Executioners they are, when their Commission is to slay the wicked Enemies of God: What Dispatch does the Sword of Death make in the Hand of one of these Mighty Spirits? (d) Witness the sudden Destruction of Sodom, the whole Camp of the Affyrians in a Night, and the Slaughter in Israel for David's Sin. Be we never fo unwilling in the last Day to come to the Bar, the Angels that wait on the Judge will easily hale us thither. In the Harvest the

⁽c) Rev. 20. 11. (a) Gen. 19. 13. 2 Kin 19. 25. 2 Sam. .QI .EI . Reapers

Reapers are the Angels, and their Office is to bind up the Tares in Bundles to be burnt *: We shall be but as Straw and Chaff in their Hands, and no more able to resist than the cut Corn or Hay is to deliver it self out of the Hand of the Mower. The Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that do offend, and them which do Iniquity and cast them into a Furnace of Fire, &c. We shall not be able to struggle from the Hands of these Officers of Justice; who also doubtless will be found as superior in Number as they are in Strength; for our Lord will come in the glory of the Father, with all

the boly Angels.

It seems not congruous that the Devils shou'd be used in that Day, as to be sure their Service will not be needed: for tho' they are both able and ready enough to drag the Souls whom they deceive to their Misery, and now they think it so much Gain to do so; yet we must consider them as Criminals and in Chains themselves aagainst that Day, which will be the time of their Torment, and it may be well thought they will fly from and tremble before their Judge as much as any, and appear only by the constraint and force of the Almighty Hand of God. And yet I have feen one chief Villain among a Crew of Robbers, who has hang'd all the rest by his Testimony against them, when at the same time it appear'd to be his own Example and Perfuafions which drew them into the Crimes for which they fuffer'd.

3. The Truth of God puts this Necessity upon us. God has fixed the Day, and the Decree is feal'd. The Period of the World's Duration, and of our Life in it, is known, and ordained.

bnA .?

^{*} Matthi3. 41, 42.

(a) His Days are determined, the Number of his Months are with thee; thou hast appointed his Bounds which be cannot pass. And thinkest thou, O Man, that thou shalt escape the Judgment of God! Can you, and there be a God of Truth? Who has promised it to his Saints, who are crying to him, How long shall it yet be, O Lord, Holy and True? And who has threatned it to the Wicked, who deride and blaspheme. Truth will and must stand though Heaven and Earth pass away (b), the Saints now claim this Honour, to judge the World, to judge Angels; and Justice claims the Triumphs of that Day over the Wicked: God will not sacrifice his Truth and Glory, to save thee the Torment of this Expectation. He is of one Mind and who can turn him (c)!

The Judgement Day is too fignificant and important a Thing to be, on any Account, put off one Moment beyond the limited Day. Shou'd all the miferable Ghosts in Hell begin to pray then, in careful Tears, but for one Age more of Respite e'er their Torments shou'd be full, it wou'd obtain nothing; nor, shou'd the Devils adjure bim to return, and adjourn their Tryal to another

Day.

4. Inexorable Justice makes it necessary. I will go down, said God in the Case of Sodom, and see (d). Justice requires that Sin be punished; 'tis a righteous thing with God, his Holiness shines illustriously herein; for that implies a Repugnancy in his Nature, and a necessary Hatred, and this infers an everlasting Excision. So that the Curse is just, and must be executed in both the Parts of it, the first and the second Death both, on the Soul that is found at last in its Sins.

⁽a) Job 14. 5. (b) Mat. 5. 18. (c) Job 23. 13, 14, (d) Gen. 18. 21.

^{5.} And

5. And lastly, The Pity and Mercy of God will be no Refuge for us then. I know it is hither the distressed Sinner will fly, but Addresses made here will be in vain, for God's Mercy is at perfect Agreement with his Truth and Holinels. The Season of Mercy is now over, the

Time of Pity past. For,

1. God has born long already; longer than we can deserve or challenge. He might righteously have struck us dead in the very first Sin we ever committed, and after the first Day and Offer of Grace we did abuse. His Piry has been mourning over us, and pursuing us with Intreaties because we will dye, to some twenty, to some thirty, to others forty Years and more; and now being apprehensive of Death, do we ask God to pity and spare us? Why, what Sense have we had of the Compassions and Forbearance of God toward us unto this Day? Have we not despised the Riches of 'em? And do we deserve any more? We have done what we can rather to provoke him to shut up the Bowels of tender Mercy, and that his Compassions should fail for Evermore. For,

2. Abused Patience is Incensing, and may well hasten Vengeance. It wearies God and ri-

pens Men for Judgment (a).

3. Supposing God shou'd wait longer on, and reprieve wicked Men, it wou'd in the Issue be no Mercy to 'em. It wou'd prove no Kindness or Advantage to 'em Eventually. For they wou'd sin more, and treasure up more Wrath to themselves. God sees it wou'd be so, and therefore it is rather Mercy to put an End to their Life and Sinning together: For as it were better never to have been, than to be miserable for ever; so it

⁽a) Gen. 6. 3, 7. Prov. 1. 24, 25.

were better not to be allow'd to live to Morrow, than to be suffered to sin in it, and make our selves the more miserable for ever after

thereby.

4. There wou'd be the same Reason why God shou'd spare the Sinner always hereafter, as why he shou'd do it now. And so by this specious Pretence of more Pity, Death and Judgment must never come at all. For, 1. To Morrow Death will be as aftonishing to the Man, as it is to Day. 2. His Prayers and Promises wou'd be the same they are now. And, 3. God sees that his Vows wou'd be as false and ill-perform'd hereafter, as they have been in times past. So that by the same Reason he may spare for Ever, as beyond the Day, which his own Goodness and Wisdom have already fixt on. Experience does too much satisfie us in this Matter: For how often are People affrighted in the Apprehension of Death, earnestly befeeching God to spare 'em for this Time only, yet when answer'd have grown worse than before; and the next Sickness or Danger they have had the same Consternation as before, and made the same Promises, and yet again liv'd as ill as ever; and God fees, that in the next Visitation we are as false in the eager Cries we are scar'd into as ever, that we treacherously trifle with him; and wou'd it be wise Compassion, or soolish Easiness in God, to regard such Prayers, by which we wou'd escape dying for ever, that we might everlastingly live to dishonour him.

Let us not then seek Shelter under the Imagination of the Divine Pity, when the Soveraignty, Wisdom, Power, Truth and Justice of God are against us. Necessity is laid upon us, and we must look to be forc'd to resign our Souls to God that gave'em, when he sends Death to make a Demand.

The. Let us from all be exhorted and directed to know and improve the Time of our Probation: Now in this our Day to confider the Things of our Peace. Men live as if they neither thought themselves Mortal nor Accountable: As if they shou'd never dye, or there were no Judgement after it : As if never to leave this World, or not to Account for their Behaviour in it: As if there were no Life after this, or at least, that this had no Relation to it; or there were to be another Day of Tryal and Forbearance after the prefent. Let me therefore fay these two Things.

r. Expect no other Time of Probation than the present Life. It wou'd be a ruinous Delusion to do fo. God has not given us the least ground for any fuch Hope; but much the contrary has he affured us of. (a) To Day if ye will bear his Voice, - left he Swear in his Wrath, if you shall ever enter into his Rest. There is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave. In Death there is no remembrance of thee, - shall the Dust praise thee, &c.? This dashes to Pieces such a fond Hope and Presumption. If a Man dye, shall be live again? Save at the Resurrection, and that is to an immediate Judgment.

2. Beware of fond Partiality, through the Iway of foolish Self-love, which is apt to delude us in our Reasonings about the Eternal Judgment. I verily believe that many undo themselves through this corrupt Byass on them. Selflove is natural and strong, and flatters us into vain Hopes upon wrong Principles, and in no Instance more than in our Opinions and Hopes

about the Judgment to come.

If The vain Hopes are principally these two,

⁽a) Mat. 24.46. Luk. 12.58. 19. 42. Heb. 3. 15. 9.6 teceles. 9. 10. Pfalm 6. 5. 115. 17. Ifa 38.19.

that our Cries shall gain us some Respit, or some Abatement of the Threatning: That God will defer Execution on our Petition, or that we shall not find the Misery of the future World so great as we are made to fear. Now all the Reason any Man can give for entertaining fuch Hopes is only this, that he loves himself too well to be content to be thus miserable: It looks cruel and barbarous to him, that fuch a dear Person as he is to himself, should meet with such Treatment: Flesh and Blood grow pale and chill through Horror at the thought of it, and we are willing to hope, as Peter for his Mafter very sensitively, that these Things shall not be. The only Reason is because we wish they never might be; we confider not what the Honour and Holiness of God do challenge, but what Self-love relucts againft, and deprecates. Just as if a Criminal in Prison should flatter himself till the Assizes come, that the Judge can never be fo cruel as to take away his Life; which were it reasonable from one Man to another, yet human Affections or Judicatories are no Measure or Rule of the divine Pity or Judgment. But in order to the raifing in us these foolish Hopes, there are manine of

2. Vain Principles and Reafonings, which unless we have a Care, our fond Self-love will deceive us into. Men are very unwilling to own these, but upon an impartial Search to the Bottom of their own Hearts, they find 'em lurking

there.

r. Self-love will endeavour to perswade us to think Mercy in God to be foolish Pity. Not that Sinners will give that Name to it, or think it Foolishness; but in reality they call that Mercy, which wou'd be Easiness, and inconsistent with the Wisdom and Holiness of God. Be not deceived, it is not always Mercy to succour in every every kind of Misery, let it come how it will. Mercy in God acts in Conjunction and Concurrence with his Wisdom and Justice. The Attributes of God do not jar and clash, otherwise they must no longer be call'd his Perfections. Mercy and Truth must agree and kifs in our Salvation: But they cou'd never do so if this were Mercy. which the Sinner wishes were so, and fondly calls fo. Mercy in a King or Judge must be directed by the Ends of Government, to preserve the Honour of that: It were ruinous Weakness. and fatal Tenderness to let all Malefactors escape unpunish'd, because Nature relents at their Destruction. The World wou'd foon become a Den of Thieves at this rate, Wickedness wou'd grow rampant, Laws wou'd become contemptible, and such a pitiful Magistracy wou'd be a Bane and Curse to the World. Let us then have just and honourable Thoughts of God's Mercy, and fet it in its true Light, by placing it and his Holiness and Truth together. For that God is infinitely Merciful, makes nothing for the Comfort of impenitent Sinners, because his Holiness makes them necessarily hateful, and his Truth obliges him everlaftingly to destroy them.

2. Self-love will endeavour to perswade us into an over-weaning Conceit of our selves, and that God and all Creatures have Opinion of and Partiality to us. We can bear that the Threatning shou'd hold good as to others, but we can't so easily believe it shall as to our selves. What me? Surely God will show more regard to me; as he has made me dear to my self, so I cannot but think I am to him. Can he be so angry at the work of his own Hands? And cast away one whom he has so liberally endow'd? For we do conceit Accomplishments in our selves, that are not, and magnifice those that God has bestowed

flowed on us, and are ready to fansie them as engaging in God's Eyes, as they are in our own: Be it bodily Beauty and Strength, or be they internal Accomplishments, —Wit, Learning, &c. Or be they outward Goods, Riches and Honour: We grow vain and proud on all these Accounts, and seem to expect some Respect will be had to our Persons, some Consideration had to Birth, Estate, Parts, Improvements. But it is sufficient Answer to all this Fondness and Do-

tage, to fay these two Things.

1. God does not at all need thee and thy Accomplishments: He has Hofts of better and superior Creatures to place his Favour on; Glorious and Perfect Spirits wait on, and ferve and praise him always. Nor does he need these at all to make him Bleffed, being infinitely that in himfelf: And if he did need them and more, yet not thee, than whom he cou'd raife up to himfelf more glorious Sons out of the very Stones of the Streets. And moreover, there are those in Hell, who had more to boast of than you of Dignity, Learning, Power, Riches, Strength, Beauty, &c. You will find your Betters there, as bad as they are; miserable Ghosts, that once had as good a Conceit of themselves as you have now of your dear felf, and made a much greater Noise in the World, and merited and look'd for as much Confideration in another World, as you can: Yet God has not regarded them, nor will he thy Per-

2. He can and will honour himself in our Ruin, if we live and dye impenitent in Sin. He will despise our Image, and laugh at our Fall, whatever Figure we really do make here, or swelling our selves, conceit our selves to doc You will find that Holiness is as dear to God, as you would have Pity to be. He'll not relent towards

wards thee, and yet his infinite Compassions remain with him; but it has nothing henceforth to do with thee, who are taken into the Hands of Justice. The Saints in Glory lose the Infirmity that attended the Exercise of Pity here: We have a plain Instance of this in Abraham. You know well of how good and merciful a Nature he was: When he heard of Sodom's Doom, how importunate did he fue and argue for sparing Mercy to that finful Place? And now he is in Heaven, can we think him less good and kind than he was before? No, but much more fo: Yet we read in the Parable of the Rich Man in Hell, who cry'd to him in Anguish, Father Abraham, have Mercy on me, and fend Lazarus with one drop of Water only to cool my Tongue, for I am tormented in this Flame: - I fay, we read that now in Heaven, that once tender hearted Saint cou'd fee that miserable Son of his in Torments, and not relent, nor give him one Drop of Water at his hideous Cry. For it is the Day of the Triumph of Justice, and God, Angels, and Saints have given over pitying, and rejoyce to fee Holiness and Justice in its Glory.

Let us then in the Fear of God, and for the Love of our Souls, carefully improve the present and only Time of our Probation. Let us look for no other Season of Grace or Working-day, when this ends; let no vain insidel Hopes beguile us, and fear the absurd Reasonings of blind Self-love. Think not that Death will stay at thy Tears, or that God will abate of his Threatning in favour of thee: For what art thou better than thy Fathers? And if an impenitent Unbeliever and unholy Person, what art thou better

than those that are in Hell before thee?

So then let us live as those that know they must dye; and that after Death is the Judgment, without

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without any the least intervening Space of a second Probation. Let us often think of dying, and spend this Life for God who has given it to us, and who will certainly call for it again, and on us to account for it. Do nothing but what you may comfortably reslect on when Death comes; what you can answer to your own Conscience now, and to Christ hereafter. At least make a Vertue of Necessity, and since you must obey your Lord's Summons, and go to Judgment, live so as that — You may have Considence before him at his Coming.

MATTH. xxv. 7.

label with the best ow to

Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

A Nd indeed they might well do so, when the doleful Cry, before spoken of, enter'd their Ears. They must be more than dead who cou'd slumber on then; for the Dead shall leave their Graves at that Voice. The Power of God will be exerted to do them this Kindness, if so be it will be any to them to be awak'ned. To some this will be in Judgement, to others in Mercy; some will make Advantage of this Alarm, others only have the Beginnings of Hell a little the sooner. Now we let our Lamps rust, and burn dim, and we slumber over them; but when Death opens our Eyes, we shall be in hast to brighten and blow 'em up, and fill them with Oil; how busie in our Fright and last Extremity!

This is the Scope of the Verse: But suffer me to make an Excursion in Criticising on the Phrase.

Phrase, they trimm'd their Lamps, which being only to a practical and devotional Improvement, shall apologize for it felf. The Greek Word fignifies they adorned their Lamps, and it is fo rendered no less than fix times over in the New Testament (a) scil, when the Gospel speaks of the Temple, that it was adorned with goodly Stones, and when the Apostles speak of Womens adorning themselves, and when the Church is spoken of as a Bride adorned for her Husband, and when we are bid to adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour: Only in the Text it is rendred - Trimming their Lamps, which being compared with the other Readings, does naturally suggest to us, that we may and do adorn the Gospel we make a Profession of, by the lively Exercise of Grace, and that this is also our Souls greatest Ornament and Glory.

r. As to the first Part of the Observation, it is not so easie to conceive, how we are faid to be Ornaments of the Gospel. It it easie to say, how we may blemish and dishonour it by an unworthy Carriage, but for us to do it Honour, or make it Glorious, is more difficult to apprehend. We must not over-rate our poor Attainments and Services, nor put undue Respect on Things so very mean and vile as filthy Rags; nor on the other Hand, may we debase the Graces of the Spirit of God in the least of his Servants, since God has put Honour on them and their Services done for his Name. The Gospel can't be made more beautiful and lovely by us, than it is in it self, we can't live up to its true native Lustre and Glory. There is a perfect, finisht and consummate Glory upon it, full of Holiness and Truth,

⁽a) Luk. 21. 5. 1 Tim. 2. 9 Titus 2. 10. 1 Pet. 3. 3, 5. Rev. 21. 2.

as its Author and Inspirer (b). It shines in the Light and Beauty of God, whose finisht Revelation it is ; Glorious in Holiness and Goodness as He. Our Conceptions and Words fall short of it, and much more our Lives: Our Admiration and our Praises are both below it. It cannot therefore mean to add any thing to its Beauty, no more than to glorifie God means to add to his Effential Glories, which are infinite and above our Understanding: And as God is not profited if we make our Ways perfect, nor suffers if we sin against bim; fo the Gospel is the same glorious and holy Thing, whether we believe and obey it, yea, or no: God has put his own Glory on it, and whatever we are, that is Lovely, for it is always Holy.

But now on the other Hand, This holy Gofpel adorns us, both as it informs the Mind in heavenly Things, and irradiates it to discern em, and as it infuses into the Heart heavenly Dispositions, and renews it to love the Things that are holy and excellent. It makes us as God to know Good and Evil; and like him, to love the one and hate the other. As the Planets and the Moon borrow Light of the Sun, so we of this. Its Design is to make us God-like, and restore us to our first Glory and Honour wherewith the Creator crowned us, and to raise us again to a Seat little lower than the Angels. It wou'd refine us to a spiritual Life, like the Inhabitants of Heaven, to have our Conversation there. By it every spiritual Beauty and Excellency is derived to us.

Hence then, we adorn that only as the Spirit and Grace of God shine forth in us, i. e. in our Life and Walk. And after all, it is in a very poor Manner, that the Beauty of Religion is ex-

⁽b) Pfalm 19. 7, 9. 119. 140. 2 Tim. 3. 16. 2 Cor. 4. 6. hibited

hibited in the very best of Men: The Measures of Holiness attained are but small, many Defects and Blemishes remain, the Light we do give shines only before Men, ignorant and finful as our selves. We do not set it off to the Holy Angels: They fee Holiness unfully'd in one another, and are near the Original and Fountain of it, which is God, and can therefore best discern how obscur'd it is in Us. We don't honour it to our own Minds and Consciences, for they see and upbraid our Defects. And if we commend Religion to one another. fo as to convince Prophane Men that truly this is of God (c), or to encourage and edify those that are Good, and raise their Honour and Reverence of God and his Ways (4); it is at last. owing to their own Defects, that our Examples feem bright and levely to them, or to the Allowance they charitably make for ours. And it is common to fee this Humility and Charity in the brightest Patterns of Goodness among Men. that they esteem and think greatly of a far lesser Light given by others; which appears the brighter to them, because they see not into the fecret Follies and Sins of the Hearts of others as they do their own. In short,

It is altogether of Free-Grace, and thro' the Redeemer's perfect Righteousness, that we are at all accounted to adorn the Gospel. No Saint merits such an honourable Word, nor durst have spoken so magnificently of his utmost Fidelity, Integrity, Laboriousness in the Service of Christ: But God magnifies his poor Creatures, and his Grace in them: So it pleases him to speak of the Lisping of Babes, and ordain Glory to Him-

⁽c) Luke 23. 47. 1 Cor. 14. 25. 1 Pet. 3. 16. (d) Mar. 5. 16. Gal. 1. 24. 2 Theff. 1. 12.

felf from thence. Let Worms and Sinners modefly put from them an Honour so much above them: As when the Judge shall at the Last Day laud the Blessed —, I was bungry and ye gave me Meat, thirsty, &c. will they not answer him as abased even in Glory?——Lord, when saw we thee, &c. We know not any thing we ever did for Thee, worthy to be thus named with Honour!

2. The other Part of the Observation is a more obvious and confessed Truth, That Grace, in its lively Exercise, is the fairest Ornament of the Soul. The Virgins adorn and dress themselves while they are trimming their Lamps. The most lovely Sight in the World is a Saint preparing vigorously for Heaven, never so beautiful

as when most religious.

Suppose he be laid on a Bed of Sickness, and gastly Death rides on the alter'd Mien; that every Blush has left the Cheeks, and wonted Spriteliness and Life the Eyes, yet his Loveliness increases if his Graces are more vigorous than before. Nay, if he die in Peace and Affurance there is a perfect Gayery upon him in Death. Some of God's Children die triumphing, Others in Peace and Calmness; Some in Transports, Others in Quiet and Serenity; but in either Men surpass themselves, and out-shine Others in all Earthly Glories. Never did any Roman General in Triumph look fo great, and gay, and resplendent as Mr. Janeway, or Mr. Joseph Allen in their Triumphant Death, or as Dr. Annefly in his Calm and Peace. I once faw a poor Old Man in this Country, who made no Figure but for his Piety, who feem'd already on his Death-bed to have changed his wrinkled Face for Moses shining one: And I am sure were the vainest Persons by, in all their tawdry Ornaments

ments of Body as well as real Beauty, they wou'd have look'd but uncomely and deformed, com-

par'd with this venerable Man.

There is but one Thing I know of that exceeds this lovely Sight, and that is a Man in Health. while Strength is firm, in whom Grace is equally vigorous: This also is a charming Sight. For if advancing Death gives the Exercise of Grace some Advantage, Health does in other respects as much. Death is terrible, therefore to fee a Man enjoy Peace and rejoyce in it, is admirable: But Health is tempting, and to fee a Man conversing with Heaven, walking with God, and above the World, while all the inviting Temptations of it furround and court him, this is more marvellous. It is as glorious a thing to be carry'd above the Security of Health, as above the Dismay of Death. A Man that makes Holiness his End and his Rule, is lovely in the Eyes of God and his Church: His Soul is, in its meafure, adorn'd in the same Array that Angels wear above, he shines in the same Light they do: He appears as a Star of Heaven, whilst others remain Clods of common Dirt.

1. We have the Testimony and Judgment of God in Favour of This *. He is the best Judge in this Case, who knows what our first Glory was, for he made us in his own Likeness, after

his own Image.

Holiness is the Saviour's Beauty, Thou art fairer than the Children of Men; and the Church's too. Holiness is our Cleanness and Spotlesness, and that our Glory: That he might sanctify and cleanse it,—and present to himself a Glorious Church without Spot or Wrinkle,—that it might be holy and

^{° 1} Pet. 3. 4, 5. Pfal. 45. 13. Prov. 1. 9. Pfal. 33. 5. Ezek. 16. 11, 12. Philip. 4. 8.

without blemish. Grace is call'd our Brightness and Splendor: Hence the Church is compar'd. to the radiant Beams of the Morning, -- clear as the Sun (a): And Sanctification is call'd our Glory (b). What is transparent and resplendent is counted rich Ornament among Men; Diamonds receive their Price and Value from this, and Princes wear 'em in their Crowns, and Queens spangle their Attire with 'em: So rich is Holiness in the Court of Heaven, the bright Stone

in its Imperial Crown.

2. Holiness is our true Ornament in the Judgment and Conscience of Mankind. Men can't fmother this Senfe, tho' they may be filent, nor bribe their Minds to think otherwife, tho' they speak contemptuously with their Lips. All the Paint of Nature is nothing fo fair, and without it but as a fewel of Gold in a Swine's Snout (c): Nor any Accomplishment, natural or acquir'd: The Witty Man pleafes, we honour the Wife, we value the Learned, but we worship the Good, an unspeakable Reverence the Soul pays to him;

Hely is always venerated.

Let the old Learned World speak. What did the renown'd Philosophers give the First Place and Praises too, but Moral Virtue? And whose Names had Fame and Reverence in the Heathen World fo much as Socrates, Cato, and Epictetus? The Veneration of the Christian Church and Schools needs no Mention: And as little the Suffrage of the Law-Makers and Governors of the World. These are the Upper Part of Mankind, for Parts and Learning ordinarily, as well as Birth and Riches They give their Authoritative Decision in Fayour of Virtuous Actions, that these make for the Beauty, Safety and Happinels of the World: Good

⁽a) Cant. 6. 10. (b) 2 Cor. 3. 18. (c) Prov. 11. 22-

Men are tacitly declar'd, by the Laws of all Nations, to be the Honour and Glory of Mankind, the Ornament and Preservers of their Country. If there were not some native eternal Excellency in Religion, why shou'd there be no Decency, Order, or Harmony in the World without it? If there wou'd be Consuson, Clashing, Distration, and every Evil Work, without the Laws and Rules of Scripture, certainly there must be something very pure, lovely, and of good Report, of great Power and Essicacy in them. For if there is some one universal Medicine and Remedy against all the Disorders of Nature, shall we deny it to have a transcendent Virtue in it?

To be fure, the folid and fober Part of Mankind confess Devotion and Piety to be the Glory of Man. There are a Juvenile Fry indeed, the Sons of Levity, who never give themselves the Trouble at all to think or enquire into the Nature of Things; whose Say is of no Moment, inflam'd and drunk with Lust: To these let us op-

pose

The Aged, who have had Time to make Obfervation of Things, and come at the Knowledge of Men, being taught by long Experience, and bitter too it may be, having been as
fondly inamour'd of Vanities as their giddy
Children are now, they leave us their dying Advice and Charge, — My Son, bear the Instructions
of thy Father, and forsake not the Law of thy Mother; for they shall be an Ornament of Grace to thy
Head, and Chains about thy Neck. Let Days speak,
and multitude of Years,—for with the Aged is Wisdom. They will best teach us what is the Grace
and Ornament of our Nature: Whereas wanton
Youth thinks it self fine with a gay Feather in the
Hat.

The

The Hypocrite and Profane Man do feldom dispute the Preference and amiable Nature of Goodness. I trust (says the Apostle) that we are made manifest in your Consciences. Not every Good Man is so in the Conscience of another, but Goodness it self is so in the Hearts of all. There goes a Saint, enters deeper into an Obferver's Heart, than There goes a Governor or a King. The one demands more outward Obfervance and Honour, the last constrains our Soul's Homage: The one bears God's outward Stamp, as the Coin of Princes do their Image and Name; the other has God dwelling in him. Therefore the Baptist had the People's Reverence, while Herod had their Obedience: Nay, Herod thought highly of him while he murder'd him; as King Saul also did of David while he sought to flay him.

Finally, and above all, Let Sickness and Death draw nigh, and bring us to a right Mind, to a cool, grave, and serious Consideration of Things, and then Religion looks lovely. Then we shou'd look upon our Selves with Love and Pleasure, if we cou'd discern the Image of God on us; the Sleep of Death wou'd be sweeten'd by the Considence of awaking in it: Then the Foolish One raves in Despair, O give me of your Oil, ye bright and lovely Virgins! that I may shine as you do, and appear as amiable as

you will to the Holy Judge.

So far have I given a loose to my Thoughts on the proper Reading of the Word, They adorn'd their Lamps; nor can I dismiss it yet without a

few devout and practical Reflections.

The Graceless Man may see himself naked, filthy, and deformed. Be his Face never so beautiful, and his Dress rich and splendid, yet his Soul is black and crooked, as our Idea is of the

the Devil and his Angels deform'd by their

But let it raise Our Value and Honour for Good Men, whom God has gloriously endow'd, and put his Comeliness upon. Let us not overlook it, and let it blot out their Spots and Blemishes, which our Ill-Nature is apt censoriously to harp on. Wo to Us if God had not dealt otherwise by us, for he calls us fair and without Spot, when we have many Stains, thro' Infirmities, cleaving to us in our best Estate. We shou'd follow this Pattern, (a) why persecute we him, seeing the Root of the Matter is found in me.

Especially, The Church of Christ shou'd appear very Glorious to Us, where is the united Lovelinesses of All Saints in One Body, the Light of All Ages, and of All the Heavenly Bodies, contracted into One Point of dazling Lustre, the Beauties of All that ever liv'd in One Face. This is the Spouse of Christ, and well may he love it: (b) Israel my Glory! The General Affembly of the Just at the Last Day, will be as the Heavenly Bodies in their Order and Glories over our Heads; a bright Corona, and radiant Circle, they will make cross the Skies, and around the Sun of Righteousness. We shou'd indeed be ravish'd already with the abundance of her Glory, (c) Every true Son of Zion being comparable to the most fine Gold, her Nazarites purer than Snow, whiter than Milk, more ruddy than Rubies, their polishing of Sapphire, &c.

But most Glorious must the Holy God and our Saviour be, for there is none Holy as the Lord, and therefore to be supreamly admir'd and lov'd with the united Might and Strength of all in-

⁽a) Job 19. 28. (b) Isai. 46. 13. (c) Isai. 66. 11.

telligent Beings. As the Seraphims cry one unto another, (d) Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, they add—the whole Earth is full of his Glory. His Holiness is his Glory: Do we love and laud and adore him for it? Many can think his Mercy indeed amiable, and say—How great is his Goodness, how great is his Beauty (e)! But the Spirits above say—(f) Who shall not glorify thy

Name, for thou alone art Holy!

Finally, Let those that have Grace be very thankful for it, and make that Prayer—the Beauty of the Lord our God be upon us (g)! How Holy flou'd our Persons be, how Holy our Communions! Put on thy beautiful Garments, O ferusalem, the Holy City (b). You that have been fond and proud of sading Beauties, now change your Object, and let the Beauty of Religion be a Motive with you to embrace it. A Good Man may look into the persect Law, and see his Face as in a Glass, and justly love it; for he beholds there the Glory of the Incorruptible God, and Himself changed into the same Image, and passing from Glory to Glory.

But how vain are they that will, after all, pride themselves in Bodily Beauty, and whose Adorning is only that outward adorning of plaiting the Hair, and wearing Gold, and putting on of Apparel (i), and it may be are not only too curious and costly in it, but fantastical and wanton; negligent of the bidden Man of the Heart, ('an inward gracious Disposition of the Soul) in that which is not corruptible, (Robes that will never wear out, no, nor lose their Gloss,) even the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, (and all other Virtues and Graces of the Spirit of God,) which

⁽d) Isai. 6. 3. (e) Zach. 9. 17. (f) Rev. 15. 4. (g) Plal. 92. 17. (b) Isai. 52. 1. 61. 10. (i) 1 Pet. 3. 4, 5.

is in the Sight of God of great Price : (effeemed, delighted in and will be highly rewarded by him.) For after this manner in the Old Time, (when there was less Vanity, and more Simplicity, Gravity. and Virtue in the World,) the Holy Women who trusted in God adorned themselves. And now, Are you their Daughters, and yet can think mean and base Things your Ornament? Have you Grace. and yet can let much by a gay Ribbon, a modifi Drefs, &c. Do these Things adorn you in the Eyes of Christ, or of his Church (k)? where a poor Believer in the Rags of Lazarus out-thines a rich Sinner in his embroider'd Purple. People merit the Pity of Beholders, while they are too studious about, and visibly taken with, their Bodily Finery: Grace will commend one without this, this will do it to none but Fools deftitute of Grace. If you feel your Minds engross'd by this Vanity, or in danger of it, think how you disparage your Soul, and the Graces of God that should array it, and return the tempting Things to the dirty Worms, from whose Bowels they came, or to the idle Inventers, who, its likely, never tafted of the Heavenly Gift, nor know what the Grace of God means. And take care to teach your Children that their fairer Part is within, and how they must get their Souls adorn'd. While they are young, try to turn away their Eyes from Vanity: Teach 'em to fear God, esteem Holiness, despise the World. and think of their Souls betimes. Keep 'em in the way of Spiritual Impressions: A Sensual Education hardens 'em against these. Their little Eyes are turn'd only to the fine gay Cloaths, they are trick'd up like Images, and told of their Finery in a way of Admiration of it,

⁽k) James 2. 2.

and taught to furvey themselves proudly. This is a pretty fure way to make 'em think only of their Bodies, and they feem to have their Parents Judgment in the Case, that their Excellency is on their Backs, and that other People carry theirs there too. These Sensitive Impressions are not easily erased as they grow up, but lay a Foundation for a Senfual Life; whereas a Simplicity of Diet and Apparel would help to preserve em from a great many dangerous Pasfions and Vices. It wou'd inure 'em to Humility, Sobriety, Patience, Labour, and a Contempt of Pleasure: Whilst the contrary ' Management makes 'em soft and effeminate, and Slaves to their Bodies and Senses, they are c taken with nothing but Bodily Pleasures and Worldly Things. And yet this is the supine Course of many Parents, who show the Vanity of their own Souls, and take a fure way to Peo-

ple the World with a vain Pofterity.

There is yet an Excess I have not nam'd, which is that Jezebel-Practice of Painting (a), which not only shows a neglected Soul, but a foul one; for it is not imaginable why Women shou'd paint, but from very gross and sensual Motives, which can't suffer 'em to regard the washing and purifying the Heart. But if such won't be convinc'd that their fairest Part is their Souls, and that it is a nobler Ambition to appear beauteous in the Eyes of God and his Angels; let 'em tire their Heads, and meet their Death, as that Woman Jezebel: A Death that soon smear'd her painted Face with her own Blood and Brains, the Dirt of the Streets, and the Slaver of Dogs.

O watch against loving thy Body fondly, to

⁽a) 2 Kings 9. 30. Ezek. 23. 40. Isai. 3. 16-24.

the utter neglect of thy Soul, that's naked it may be while this is habited with so much Cost and Exactness; that's not washed from its filthiness, while this rather than sail shall be painted; that is forgotten and deserted, while this is tended with so much officious Care; for thy Body is all to thee, thy Soul nothing: Verily God and his Holy Angels despise thee, while you commend your self only to the roving Eyes of carnal People.

Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their Lamps. Observe here— the Action related, of whom, and upon what Occasion.

their Lamps. They arose, scil. from their Sleep, for we were told they were slumbring, for it was Midnight. They shook off Sloth and Security, and show'd a more than ordinary Care for their Souls and their Eternal State. They set about an actual preparing for an immediate going to their Judge.

They trimmed their Lamps, scil. as well as they cou'd in so short a time; with all their might and in all possible haste; did their utmost to get their Souls in a meet Dress and Posture for the Presence of Christ.

2. This is related of all the Virgins, both Wife and Foolish. A thing common to all Professors, sincere or hypocritical: therefore a thing decent, sitting, and necessary, and what ought to have been done sooner.

The Wife arose from their Slumbers, and set themselves more vigorously than ever to Prayer and Holy Duties, labouring after the utmost activity and servency in the Exercise of Grace. They actually trimmed their Lamps, and got ready to meet the Bridegroom.

As for the Foolish, they try'd and made Attempts to barnish their Hearts, to wipe off the Duft, wash off the Dirt, scour off the Ruft if they cou'd: to get Repentance and Faith and the Love of God if it were to be had. They made what shew they cou'd, appear'd Penicent and Devout, as it is common for dying People to do: if they cou'd now they wou'd change their own Hearts, and it may be some of them had deluded themselves with the belief they had Grace, which they now are trying to Exercise: or, they flatter'd themselves that it is an easie thing to get it, and that they should find it in their own Power to repent, and in this foolish Confidence they now attempt and endeavour after it.

3. The Occasion of all this Haste and Diligence is the Midnight Cry before spoken of; the Summons of Death and Judgment reach'd 'em, furpriz'd, frighted 'em, and now they get up and fet about the necessary and too neglected Work

of providing for their Souls.

So that the Scope of the Words is to teach us these two Things, 1. That when-ever any of us shall apprehend Death and Judgment to draw nigh, we shall be ready and glad enough to set about the Work of Religion, however remiss and backward we are in time of Health. 2. That indeed it is then the Duty and Wisdom of all, and will be the Care even of the best Men, to shew extraordinary Concern and Diligence for immediate Preparation to meet their Judge.

1. Doct. That whenever any of us apprehend the Judge to draw night us, we shall be ready and glad enough to set about the Work of Religion, however remiss and backward we are in time of Health. So the Ten Virgins, who slumbred and slept while the Bridegroom tarried, yet as soon

as they hear his Voice and see him coming, they get up and prepare (as well as they can) to meet him. Yes, with all their Hearts they wou'd be Religious now if it were in their Power.

Here are three Things to be observed. 1. That God sometimes gives us lively Apprehensions of Death and Eternity. 2. That ordinarily we are remiss and backward in the Matters of Religion without this. 3. That when we apprehend Death approaching us, we shall be forward and ready enough to set about the Work of Religion if we then cou'd.

I. God sometimes gives us lively Apprehensions of Death and Eternity. There are Seasons wherein we must be deaf and sensies, if that Cry is not in our Ears, is not the Bridegroom coming? Shon'd I not think him so, and prepare to meet him. I will name some of those Seasons wherein God expects we shou'd be especially apprehensive of this. As,

In Fits of Sickness, which are common to every one, and for ought we know may be unto Death, our last Visitation, or at least it is some such Messenger we expect at last to call us away*. In old Age, which is a kind of mild and slow Disease, the decay of Nature that sensibly leads to a Dissolution; the Symptoms are many of the falling Tabernacle, the Dust's returning to the Earth as it was and the Spirit to God that gave it †. The Deaths of others daily about us, whom we see expire, or whom we follow to their Graves, shou'd raise in us lively Apprehensions of our own Change. Moreover, so shou'd Sermons upon Death and Judgment, at which God and Nature both expect that like Falix we do tremble. And so in

Pfalm 157. 18, 19. † Ecclel. 12. 3, 4, 5, 7.

all publick destructive Judgments, such as War, Pestilence and Famine, which sweep Countries clean of Inhabitants; and Earthquakes wherein whole Streets go down into a Pit together, and the rest like Israel at the perishing of Core slee at their Cry: In Storms also, wherein God blows with his Wind and the Pillars of Heaven tremble, and dreadful Thunders utter his Voice and the Earth melteth, its Inhabitants begging like them at Sinai, Let not God speak to us out of the Fire less we die. In all these Cases God gives us Occasion to be apprehensive of Death, and very often he makes us so, and we receive as it were the Sentence of it within our selves:

II. And till God do this we are ordinarily remiss and backward in thinking of Religion. These are great and powerful Motives to a Holy Life, and ordinarily God makes them the effectu-

al Means of it.

III

r. The Apprehension of Death and Judgment is a most powerful Motive to a Religious Life. The Masters of Morality among the Heathen have wisely and excellently improved the Argument of our Mortality, in pressing their Scholars to the Practice of Vertue. The Holy Ghost does not distain the same Argument ||. The happy Penitent wonder'd at his Companion that he did not begin to fear God when Death star'd him in the Face *. It has a natural tendency, 1. To break us off from the World. As we leave it we can't but see it an empty perishing Thing, no Portion for us, that it is high time to cease doting on it, For what are all its Offers to a dying Man? The serious Contemplation of Death breaks this Delusion and Inchantment. 2. It powerfully con-

^{| 2} Pet. 3. 11, 14. Luke 21. 34. * 23. 40, 41.

vinces of Sin. For it is it felf part of the Curfe, and the Arrest of the Bailiss that carries us to our Judge. This is the Sting of Death that it convinces of Sin, for it had not passed upon all Men but that all have sinned. 3. Herein it addresses to our Fears, to scare us from destructive Courses. Fear is a Passion that lies deep in our Nature, being sounded in Self-Preservation, the Power of which the most prosligate Sinner seels, tho he be got above Shame and Remorse. So that the last Motive to be us'd with desperate Men is, † The Terrors of the Lord, and Death brings these with a Witness.

2. God often uses this Mean to the Converfion of Men, one way or other fastening upon them the serious Consideration of Death and Eternity. This he does on some by Sermons, on others by particular Providences; on some by Dangers he has brought them into, on others by the deaths of Friends and Relatives. How many may date their Sense of the Power of Religion, from this Sickness, or that Bereavement, or fuch a Danger, or fome Sermon about the Judgment to come and the Wrath of God due unto, and to be revealed against all Ungodliness of Men. And how many unconverted Persons may remember, that if ever they have been in a ferious Frame, it was under this and the other awful Apprehension of the Eternal World? Tho' a profane Creature again now, yet he knows what Fits of Devotion he had when he thought Death near him, which were off again as that retreated, and Health returned, or Dangers were over. But unto some God sanctifies Sicknesses and Dangers, the wife and just Thoughts of which abide long after, and prevail through the

^{† 2} Cor. 5. 11.

Bleffing of God to keep the Mind habitually serious. And till God enable Men to govern their Lives by the Apprehensions of Death and a Judgment to come, there will be no holy living nor happy dying; we shall be wanton and fleshly, seeking our Portion in the present Life. To pass

a few Reflections here.

You see the great Mercy of God in visiting us fometimes with Sicknesses and Dangers. It is good for us fecure Mortals to be now and then forc'd to think of dying. It may be a bleffed Fright to us, and graciously meant by Providence. As the Lord appear'd in a threatning Manner to his Favourite Moses himself, and sought to kill bim, when nothing less wou'd scare him to his Duty *. The Soul's Life is often confulted by the Menace of Death. There are many strong Men whose Health is their Temptation, their hardy Constitution puts Death out of mind: better were it for many such that they had past their whole Life in pining Sickness, and had been long reckoning from Morning till Evening to be cut off? Mr. Baxter speaks of this great Benefit from his continual bodily Weakness, that it made him live and preach as a dying Man for many Years together; no doubt to the great spiritual Advantage of himself and many others.

And the Wisdom and Grace of God in his Providences directs us in our Sermons also to address unto your Fears. To reason with you of the Judgment to come. It is it self a Sermon to dying Creatures to shew them a Grave or a Skull, and so it shou'd be from a Pulpit only to name Death or Eternity. This serious Subject shou'd be more acceptable than more curious and deep ones, or more smooth † and bright Medita-

^{*} Exod. 14. 24. † Ifai 30, 10.

tions: it can't be too black and melancholy for Souls that are hastening to the Thing it self.

Mean while we must needs take notice of our own natural Disingenuity, that such rough Means must be used with us. Of what base Tempers are we that God must terrifie us, when his Goodness ought to lead us to Repentance, and his many Benefits shou'd engage our Souls to love and ferve him. We feldom at all mind who gave us our Being, who feeds us from the Womb, and bears us upon his Wings above all the Evils we are here incident unto every Moment, and whose Feathers have cover'd and warm'd us, as a Father's Bosom or a Mother's Breafts do lodge and cherish the Child of their Bowels. Nay, if God go on to multiply outward Bleffings to us, if he give us the Affluence of them, filling our Houses with Children and with Substance to feed them; if he give us Honour and Credit in the World, Interest in our Neighbours, and all that a modest Mind wou'd crave, yet how feldom are we prevail'd on in an Ingenuous manner to Jacob's Spirit, | The Lord shall be my God. But God is constrained by our perverse and stupid Unthankfulness, to change the Meafures of his Providence, to take away his abused Mercies, to flay our Children, to diminish our Substance, to break our Ease and Health, to send Terrors into our Consciences, and set his Angel with a drawn Sword in our Way, &c. that is, to treat us as fordid Spirits shou'd be, as the Horse that must be taught by the Whip and Spur. But it is a Reproach to God's Children that less rough Means will not fave 'em: Methinks we shall blush at it even in Heaven, that we have

[|] Gen. 28, 20.

been so dragg'd thither, and yet we shou'd never get thither if these Severities and Violences were not done us.

To close this Head, Let us cherish all awakening Thoughts, however suggested to us by the Providence of God. We shou'd not read a Text that speaks of the Eternal State; nor feel an Ach or Indisposition in our selves, nor remember past Visitations and our Frames in them, nor hear of a Neighbour's death, nor see a Funeral pass along the Streets, nor pass by a Grave, nor see an old Man go stooping and trembling, but the Thoughts of our Mortality shou'd be reviv'd and strengthned in us: which being made familiar to us, how wifely and circumfpectly wou'd it make us live! How wou'd it check our Vanity, and rebuke Irreligion, and flir up the pure Mind to what is Holy! Our Souls wou'd have all our Care, and this World our Contempt and Scorn: Death when it comes wou'd look friendly and peaceable, and the Prospect beyond it gay and bright.

III. We shall be forward and ready enough to set about the Work of Religion when we apprehend Death advancing on us. The sleepy Virgins arise in fright and haste at the Midnight Cry, We are these secure Creatures, and in a sew Days Death will bring us a Summons hence, and then we shall wish we had been Religious in our past Life; if Grace were in our Power we shou'd now command it, if Labour cou'd procure it we shall spare no Pains, if it were to be purchased we shall be willing to part with the whole World for it, to sell all that we have and buy it. How serious do profane Men appear when Death scares 'em! As Mariners in a Storm call upon God with those Lips which but just now rent

his

his Sacred Name, and they that never pray'd in their lives before, fall on their Knees now. In what Anguishes are careless People put by Sicknesses! How do they loath and curse their past Sins and Folly, and how happy do they count a holy Person then, wishing to die the death of the Righteous! How do they cry for more Time to make their Peace with God in, and promise folemnly how they wou'd improve it; that they wou'd never be fuch Fools again as to forget God and their Immortal Souls. Some feel all this when God does but thunder from the Clouds: as the Skies grow black, so fast are their Souls filled with Darkness, their guilty Hearts fmite 'em at the Apprehension of the Power and Righteousness of God, and they promise to themfelves to fear God. So the fecure World in the Days of Noah cast sad and longing Eyes toward the floating Ark, from the Tops of Towers and Mountains to which they fled. I shall point at two General Reasons of this.

I. Mens Opinions of Things are rectified then, and their Gusts and Relishes are alter'd.

II. The Temptations that do now hinder Men from thinking of their Souls will lose their Force or not be at all.

I. Mens Opinions of Things alter and are rectified, and they lose their old Gusts and Relishes. Mistake and Error is one Reason of Mens giving themselves up to Sin. They view this World and the other, Sin and Holiness in salse Glasses, till Death holds to them a true one. When I say their Gust alters with their Apprehension of Things, I don't mean that they have now a true Savour of Spiritual Things, but rather R a pall'd

2 pall'd Appetite to worldly Things, a difrelish of Sin for the present, and they wish for they know not what, i. e. to be made Holy, not that they love Holiness, or are pleas'd that God is Holy, but because they find him so, and therefore it is of Necessity that they be so too, if they wou'd hope to see him in Glory. If they cou'd live Eternally to enjoy their Sins, no doubt that wou'd be their Choice, but as Things fland and they must die, the World does not taste as it once did.

r. The World appears now to be a plain Cheat and flattering Bubble. It promis'd much and now is going, and the Sinner has feen no good in it. The Life of Sin and Sense is closing as a gay painted Scene, and ending as a Dream of the Night. An Eternal Adien is to be bid to all we love in it, and till now the Man never had a Conviction of the Vanity of what is Mortal and Corruptible: his Immortality comes now to mind, he remembers that he has a Soul to live for ever, and that will need a new Dwelling now its old one is falling. Now our Lord's Words are felt of great weight, Whose shall these things be? And what is a Man profited if he gain the whole World and lose his Soul? Cou'd Men retain the same Opinion of the World always which they have on Sick-Beds, how light wou'd they fet by it? And how loose sit from it? And if this had its merited Contempt, one great Hindrance of Religion were remov'd, even that Friendship which is Enmity to God.

2. Not only do the Man's past fensual Enjoyments appear cheap and mean, but fickly and loathsome, both to his Understanding and Conscience. To his Understanding they are so. He wonders at himself that he has been labouring for the Wind! That he ever furfeited on Things

which

which are fo taftless and insipid now! That, let Fancy dress 'em up as gayly as it can, are wan and gaffly as Death. For indeed, whenever the preternatural Hear of Lust is over, and Men are cool'd, as they fufficiently are by the cold gripe of Death, they wonder at themselves for their past fensual Cravings and Relishes. Ah, cries the dying Sinner, I have fold my Immortality for the most wretched Gratifications which it is a shame to mention! Were I to live again shou'd fuch Trifles ever take me more? Cou'd I facrifice my Soul again to any base, paltry Lust, the Pleasure of a Moment!

Moreover, These are imbitter'd by the guilt of them, and made offensive to Conscience. same Wine that the Drunkard once inflam'd himfelf with, now looks as the Cup of Death. The same Inchantress who once bewitch'd a simple One, wou'd be no Provocative or Pleafure to him now. Conscience stabs at the Memory of these Things, and calls 'em Foolish and Brutish, and Damning. It wou'd be more Pleafure now to difgorge past Surfeits, than ever the greedy swallowing them was. Tho' fo luscious in the Mouth once, they are bitter in the Belly, the Gall of Asps

within.

3. Sin appears very dreadful as Death comes on. It were easie to die, if Death bare no relation to Sin. Cou'd the Man be miferable and yet innocent and justified to his own Conscience, the Sting of Death were gone, and the Worm of Hell; his outward Misery wou'd be comparatively nothing. But Sin throws off its Mask and Vizour when Death advances: Luft can no longer gloss and smooth it felf, excuse or recommend it felf, under the Notion of Good, whether pleasant or profitable. It stares a Man in the Face with a malicious wrathful Grinn, as a R 2 Ghoft

Ghost does a Murtherer, accusing and calling for

Vengeance.

Dangers greaten to the Eye as they draw near, and the Soul's Dread increases with 'em. The presence of Evil alarms whom the Threatning at a distance cannot. What the Sinner put far from him in Health is now actually come. He fears the Face of an angry God, and the Wrath of the Lamb; conscious that he cannot plead to his Righteousness and Truth, nor fly from his Power. If there were a Hole darker than the Shades of Death that cou'd really hide him, it wou'd not only look less horrid, but even lightsome to him.

- 4. A Saviour is now precious, as the Eyes roll and swim in Death. O for the reconciled Face of God and an Interest in Christ! That is the Soul's one Desire; the Desire of Happiness increases, and a doubled Anxiety is reasonable, the Eternal State being immediately to be determin'd. It is no longer possible to laugh at Damnation, or think lightly of Christ and Heaven.
- of Spiritual Good is at last apprehended. Death opens the Loser's Eyes, and he restects with himfelf— I might have had Peace in this astonishing Hour, and a sweet Review of past Obedience and Communion with God, and a bright Prospect of being with him for ever. I might have been able possibly to have composed my self to die as I us'd to lay me down and sleep. I might have had a Saviour to call on now, believing that he regarded me. Death might have been my sweet Sleep in the Arms of the Bridegroom until the Resurrection, my very Dust remaining united to him and remembred by him. Death might have been welcome, and I shou'd have

have faid - I am ready to be offered - : Yea, it might have been the Wish of a longing Soul, willing rather to depart and be with Christ, which is far the better. I might have had a Crown and a Kingdom before me, not a Dungeon of Darkness or a Pit of Flames: and Joys for evermore instead of Wailings rhat shall never end. I shou'd have had Conscience within me my Comforter and not Accuser. I shou'd have had bright Angels now guarding me, looking on me with Love, and glad to take the Charge of a redeemed Soul; and not as I fear a black Guard of hateful Fiends to feize me as I leave my gasping Body. And above all, I shou'd have had my Saviour with me, strengthning me as Heaven did him in his Agonie; I shou'd have seen him standing ready to help me, and cry'd to him as the first Martyr did, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit! I shou'd have fear'd no Evil in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, his Rod and his Staff wou'd have comforted me. I shou'd have dwelt in Eternal Mansions with him, and have chang'd for an infinitely better Life. Ah! cou'd I but look back and fay, Lord, Remember bow I have walked before thee with a perfect Heart! Or, cou'd I look forward and fay, I know that my Redeemer liveth ! But O base Lusts, for you I sustain this inestimable Loss, which renders you ten thousand times the cheaper and viler! O Injurious Chears, that have defrauded me of Infinite Good, what Hatred and Antipathy ought I to bear you! Thus the Opinion and Gust alters as Death advances. With Moods

II. The Temptations that do now hinder Men from thinking of their Souls will not be then, or will lose their Force. There is no room for these Suggestions and Persuasions of the Flesh R 2 and

and the World, which do now prevail with us.

Particularly,

r. Sicknesses disable the Flesh from Lusting: pall the Appetite and chill the Blood. It is a forced Mortification of the Members that are on the Earth: both Inclination and Power are for the present gone, and old Pleasures wou'd be the greatest Pain. The sick Stomach loaths its most delicious Meats, the very smell is offensive and oppresses.

2. The World has not the Face to tell a dying Man of its Pleasures, Riches or Honours. Its fatal Remonstrances master our Convictions now, and carry carnal Men headlong; but advancing Death puts the salse Flattery out of Counte-

nance.

3. Vain Companions lose their Charm, as well as Confidence to tempt. When a Sick-Bed detains the Sinner from those Jolly Clubs, where Men use to hearten and harden one another in Profaneness and Intemperance: when he is shut in a lonesome Chamber, where Silence is kept about him, and the Light shut out lest it shou'd offend him, it must needs cause a great Change of Thought in him. He has now only his own Conscience to converse with, and a few serious Friends that tend him, who tell him what he shou'd think on by their melancholy mournful Looks. This is a much differing Scene from the Mirth and Noise of the Man's wonted Haunts, the Remembrance of which wou'd but sting and ftrike with Horror.

4. And that other fatal Delusion can be no more now, scil. the Hopes of many Years yet to come, and living to Repent hereafter: the Evil Day can no more be put at a distance, the Hour being come wherein we must go and be judged. And it is common for Criminals to fall

into

into Agonies then, who brav'd it before under Condemnation.

And no wonder if wicked Men in these Circumstances wish for Grace, when their old Temptations have no Force or Power lest: Cou'd these come at them as they do in Health, they wou'd be carryed away into all Iniquity as easily as before; and it is no great Matter for one that is not tempted to Evil to be willing to be Religious; when neither the Flesh or the World can come at us with their usual Baits, when our Apprehensions of Things alter, and the Relish of sensual Objects cease. No wonder that the slumbring Virgins rise when all Temptations to sleep go off, and the awakning Motives to a speedy

Preparation are fo forcibly urged.

The Use of this Dostrine is, to persuade and press us to shew the same Diligence before hand, which we shall be willing to do when we apprehend our Dissolution at hand. If then we shall think Religion a wise and necessary Care, so let us do now; and begin to do, what we shall vainly wish done and mourn after at the last, as we are consuming and wasting away. A necessary Work can't be gone about too soon, and what is Wisdom to Morrow is so likewise to Day. It is a Rule always of use for the Conduct of humane Life, Never to do any Thing which we know we shall repent of when we have done, nor ever to neglect any Thing which we know we shall afterward wish we had done.

Consider seriously these two Things, 1. It is at the best an extream Hazard run, when a Man leaves his great Work to, and lets his Eternity depend on one weak uncertain Effort in the Pangs of Death. 2. The Torment of Death-bed Wishes must needs be very great: When a Man lies there wishing, O that my Peace were made R 4

with God! O that I had lived Religiously while Health was spared to me! That my Work had been done before this Hour, and that I had nothing now to do but to die! Racks to the Body are not worse than these to the Mind. This we may eafily conceive on feveral Accounts. 1. The Pain of Grief and Sorrow, Trouble of Heart and Anguish must needs be here. To die beginning to repent, is to die in certain bitterness of Soul. A Load heavier than the Sand lies upon the finking Heart. Even that Day will thy Complaint be bitter, and yet thy Stroke beavier than thy Groaning: i. e. a Sorrow inexpressible. 2. The Pain of Shame and Confusion will be here. The Sinner calls himself a Sot and a Beaft, both abhors and is confounded at his own fortish Management. And it is no little Torment to be an Abhorrence to our selves, and bear the Reproaches of our Hearts. 2. Here must needs be distrusting Fears, and Fear bath Torment : It comes as Desolation; Terrors pursue Guilt as a stormy Wind, and as a wide breaking in of Waters, and the Soul's Serenity passeth away as a Cloud. 4. There is the Torture of Despair in a great Degree. 'Tis ordinarily too late to hope, though wishing can't be helpt. This is almost the very Rack of Hell, where the Damned lie shricking in remediless Anguish, wishing for Deliverance, but expecting none. O, why can't Men foresee what they will one Day wish for, and provide against the evil Day, wherein we shall need God to be with us, the Light of his Countenance in the thick gathering Shades of Death. His everlafting Arms underneath us, and his Spirit fealing us, and witnessing with our Spirits that we are his. You know how our glorious Saviour met Death with these Words, Father, I have glorified thee on Earth, I b.ve finished the Work which thou gavest me to do; and

and now glorifie me with thy self, &c. How unlike him they who must then tremble and shriek out, Ah God! My Work is not begun! But so much for the first Doctrine, That how remiss and backward soever Men may be now in the Concerns of their Souls, yet they will be forward and ready enough to mind 'em as they see Death ad-

vance toward them. I pass on to the

2. Doct. That it is the Duty and Wisdom of the very best of Saints to show an extraordinary Care for immediate Preparation, as the time of their Departure draws on. The Text fays that all the Virgins arose and trimmed their Lamps; the Wife themselves did so, or else they had not answered to this Name and Character. The Foolish were frighted out of their Sleep, and put into Consternation; so the Wife were awak'ned out of their Slumbers, and alarm'd to extraordinary Diligence; for the Case and Circumstance are altogether extraordinary. Did the Wife do well to get up and dress and adorn themselves against the Bridegroom's Coming? Certainly: the least Thing they cou'd do, and the very Thing they are bid. How shou'd they go to meet him? Undrest? In Disorder? With unwashed Hands and Face? In indecent Garb? In Rags or Filth, fo that the Shame of their Nakedness shou'd appear? Can a Bride forget ber Ornaments? Or a Saint meeting his Lord bis Attire? It is a very awful Thing to the very best of Men to die: they find enough to do to brighten their living Graces, to appear beautiful in the Eyes of their Saviour. The Presence they are call'd into is dreadful although desireable, as Jacob says of the Gate of Heaven, and the Place where God is (a). If we are but to appear before a gracious earthly

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⁽a) Gen. 28. 17.

Soveraign, though it be to receive Honours from him, and Expressions of Favour, yet it gives us Thought and Concern: we find an awe on our Minds, and take an extraordinary Care before we enter his Courts that every Thing be decent about us: How much more will a Saint look to his Soul when he is going unto the dreadful and glorious Presence of God, where Angels and Saints are casting down themselves and their Crowns (b). Not only did the Irreligious and Profane in Ifrael fear and quake when God appeared in his Majesty on Sinai (c), but the most excelling and favourite Saints also, even Moses himself. Moreover, a new Scene is immediately to be feen, as this Curtain of Flesh is drawn aside, a great Gulph is to be shot, and we arrive at a new World; a World of Wonders, and an unknown State, fave that the good Man knows that he shall change infinitely for the better. Let me offer further these three Considerations.

I. That the best of Christians are not alike at all Times in actual Preparation for Death. There are too often fad Intermissions of the lively Exercise of Grace, which put a Man back a great way as to his Evidences for Heaven. In this Cafe though the Seed of Grace be not perished, yet it is a Business of Labour and Pain to recover it into sensible Life. We find by the sift Plalm that it is no little Work for a flumbring Saint to recover his loft Ground. But suppose Sickness had seiz'd David in his long stupisi'd drowfy Frame, and the Prophet had brought him the Sentence of Death with the Charge of Sin upon him, wou'd he not have had much the more to have done by Way of Preparation, to have got his Heart out of that ill Frame, his lan-

⁽b) Rev. 4. 10. (c) Heb. 12. 21.

guishing Piety reviv'd, those Graces again in actual and vigorous Exercise, which had been so long disus'd and gathering Soil and Rust? But supposing he had but one poor Week of Life for all this, how wou'd his Cares and Tears have

multiplied?

Yet this is a Case supposable of very good Men sometimes; the Sicknesses whereof they die find 'em sadly desective as to actual Readiness; slumbring and dull though they have the Wisdom of God and his Anointing in them, which gives 'em a great deal to do at last and much to bewail. For though a Man's State be the same and safe to Morrow as to Day, yet he may to Day be more in Readiness for an immediate Change than to Morrow; for before that comes he may fall into some Sin or other, which may put him a great way back, and create him much Darkness; in which Frame, if Sickness surprize him, he must needs increase to himself many Fears and much Work.

2. But suppose it find a Child of God in the best Frame of his whole Life, ready and waiting for his Change, in a most comfortable Assurance and bleffed Peace; yet as Death comes on he will aspire after better Frames still: His Humility, his Aspirations after more Faith and Sight of God will grow to his last Minutes. What though he knows his Redeemer lives, and his Sins are forgiven; what though he feel the Love of God ruling in him, and Heaven begun both as to Holiness and Joy; will he think he lacks nothing, though he is infinitely thankful for fo much, nay, though he fay with the Apostle he has all? He may have enough to content him, to delight him, to make him triumph with For unspeakable; but at the same time he opens his Mouth for more: For no Man is so good but Grace Grace may be increased to him, and be strengthned in him. A Saint on the Confines of Glory
will not, cannot say, I have attained, I am perfect:
This is reserved for the heavenly State, but till
we die we must be praying for more Light and
Grace, when that which is perfect comes, and all
Impersection is done away: Nor this neither absolutely till the Resurrection of the Body and its
Glory together with the Souls; for that only is
fully and adequately to be called Life and Immor-

tality.

To return, He that has most Grace sees more Degrees yet behind to be acquired, and a more lively Exercise of every particular Grace possible. No Man can so see God, but like Moses, he longs to know more of him, nor fo loves God but he wishes and strives to do it more; nor is fo like God but he craves to be more: And though fome holy Souls have had fuch over-pouring Joys in their dying Hours, as to cry out it is enough, and that more they cou'd not hold, yet they have expected more when changed, and long'd for the State of Perfection for this very Reason, that they might contain more and yet live. We have never felt fo great Ardors of Devotion but we may more, nay they prepare for more, and diftend the Heart's craving, and whet the Appetite after more. Divine Enjoyments do not fatiate, but enlarge the Desire after a clearer Sight and larger Communications. The true Good fills us but never gluts us, whereas false seeming Good never fills and yet cloyes. In a Word, fince Men at their best may be better, no wonder if a Saint, never fo holy and heavenly, is anxious when he comes to dye to be found yet better and brighter than ever before. How great foever the Blaze of his Lamp now is, so as to enlighten Death it self, dispel its Shades,

Shades, and transport Beholders. yet he wou'd, if he cou'd, now give more Light: He knows, that he who is least in the Kingdom above is greater than he, and wou'd by any Means attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead: He wishes for the utmost, being going to an unspotted Communion and a holy God.

3. It is a Time and Season for our very best when Death draws nigh. God demands it, and

it is the Saints Interest.

that Hour. The Nature of the present Providence speaks it; for if the Voice of Affliction is—Seek me early, much more does the more awful Messenger Death say so. Indeed God always requires our Best of us, all our Heart and Soul and Might in every Duty: But if ever we exceed our selves, 'tis decent it be as we come within Sight of our Graves.

Our Commerce with this World is now effectually hinder'd, and peremptorily forbidden. We are call'd off from any further Concern with it, fave only to fet our (a) House in Order, and take a farewell, make our Will and shake Hands with all we possessed here. And being no more to think of the Body and this World, we must be called to think of our Souls and another Life; to be intent only on our spititual Concerns, no more to look to the Things which are feen, and are Temporal, but to those that are unseen and Eternal (b). I may allude to our Saviour's Words (c), Let not those that are on the House-top come down to take any Thing therein, let him not bestow a Thought more about these trivial transitory Things. For moreover,

Eternal Things are now put in our view, and

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⁽a) Ifa. 38. 1. (b) 2 Cor. 4. 18. (c) Mat. 24. 17.

we are forc'd to fee them whether we will or no, as we can't help feeing a Thing that is held before our Eyes. We feel our Souls on the Wing, our Brearh at our Throats, our Sight failing, and the extream Parts already cold, and now what can be thought of but how to prepare to meet our God to whom our Spirits are returning? This is of necessity made our Contemplation, and more heavenliness and spirituality our Care, being to enter on that State wherein nothing else will stand us in any stead: Wherefore we must needs discharge our Minds of every worldly Care and sleshly Desire, and turn our Thoughts wholly to Things above, where Christ is at the right Hand of God.

2. There needs no Call from without to put a Man on this, to get his Soul into the best Frame and Posture he possibly can to meet his God. His Heart will of it self put him on it, whether he be distressed with Doubts, or whether he have Peace and Comfort in the Apprehension of Death: The Effect of either will be

one and the same.

1. If the good Man be diffressed with Doubts and Fears, they will be as Spurs and Goads in his Side to shew the utmost Concern for his Soul. 'Tis a great Work to dye, the greatest Christians do sometimes find it so, and are in sad Darknesses; in which Case all that a Man can do in way of Preparation is little enough to answer the Distresses of his own Spirit. Satan's fiery Darts may be shot into the Soul; God may hide his Face when it is most of all needed and defired, late finful Slumbers and Remissness may procure this, which must needs give the Believer the utmost Affliction, and if he do not despond, yet Shame, Clouds and Fears cut the Soul, and if they do not make him fink, they will enliven and quicken him

him with all the Strength that remains in him to feek after God. If it be only that God may try a good Man in this tenderest Point in his holy Soveraignty, without any particular Lapse of his to occasion it, yet there is Sin enough in the Best to justifie God in it and give the Sufferer bitter Researchions.

His Fear demands of him, how he thinks to be carryed through the Horrors of Death: They call upon him to wrestle for the Presence of God, his Rod and his Staff to defend and support and comfort him. So fonah remembred Heaven in his Horrors, and cry'd to it, as he went down to the Belly of Hell, as he sunk below the Bottom of the Mountains, when the Depths closed him around, and the Weeds wrapt about his Head.

Fear points a dying Man to a last Minute to be instantly and diligently redeem'd. Since there is but one Sand or two to run not to lose that, but to make one great Effort for our Life, since it is

the last we ever can.

Death-bed Fears tell Men of their Judge at Hand, and he that is presently to plead for his Life has his Head and Heart busic enough. The State need be faithfully try'd, the Accounts immediately look'd over, Repentance renewed, and all the Evidences for Heaven carefully reexamined.

2. On the other Hand, if a Man have Peace and Comfort on a Death-bed, he cannot hence be secure and unconcerned because his Soul is safe, but having this Hope, he the rather purifies himself as God is pure, encourages and raises his own Heart to greater Heights of Devotion than ever. Joy will not let the Eyes close, nor the Tongue cease from Praises. Faith and Assurance are the best Principle and Motive that can be to urge us on to greater Measures and Elevations of Holines.

liness. For the Man's present Sense of Things is this.

He sees the End of a wearisome Journey near. A few Steps more, and he is at his eternal Home and Rest. At such a Sight a tir'd Man wou'd recover Strength, and the last Stage shall be run with more Life and Vigour than any of the rest. So Mariners worn out with Storms or Famine, and Fatigues of a tedious Voyage, yet renew their Strength and go to work like fresh Men at

the Sight of Land.

The Use of all is, 1. To countenance the Concern that wicked Men feel and show when they feem to themselves in Danger of Death. So far they do well, though there be nothing of Vertue and Grace in it, for the Devils themselves tremble. Wicked Men appear the more vilely obdurate when they meet Death without Concern. Some infolent hardned Fools outbrave it, and die as bold in Irreligion as they live. So Pirates and Robbers very often; like the Thief of old who reviled his Saviour on his Cross: But these Wretches seem to surpass all the Impiety of Hell, and to carry with 'em thither Degrees of Wickedness, which one wou'd suspect were not there before. It is some fort of Homage to God to be afraid of his Power and Wrath, which God will one Day force from all his Enemies, when they shall lick the Dust; at present he is unspeakably provoked at this last and utmost Contempt that profane Men can do him. Will ye not fear me, faith the Lord? Will ye not tremble at my Presence? He speaks of it with Wonder and Indignation too, as of a Thing strange as it is impious, with Astonishment as well as Anger: Will ye not fear me, faith the Lord ?

Let those Mariners take Notice of this, who can almost be swallowed up of the Ocean in its Rage,

Rage, and yet curse and swear on. Men worse than the beathen Sailors who cry'd every Man to bis God in the Storm. Men of such steeled Hearts that Judgment cannot enter. But remember none are in so much Danger of Heaven's Thunder as they that don't fear it. It is a double Iniquity to be easie and secure under Afflictions and Dangers.

Particularly, let me say to aged People, that it is a very odd and affecting Sight, to behold them careless, stupid, vain, frothy, profane, vicious, as if Death were no nearer to them than they thought it thirty Years ago. Many such, no more think of Eternity than the Children that are playing in the Streets. Believe it, my Fathers, your Security now is a far more heinous Sin in you than it was in Youth, and every Day

it is more and more aggravated.

2. Let us learn to judge charitably of People whom we see in Distress on Sick Beds. Be their Fears and Temptations many, and their Tears and Sorrows in proportion, yet it shou'd not stumble us, or lessen our Opinion of their Goodness. We shall else effend against the Generation of God's Children: As the Servants of the good King Hezekiah had done, if they had judged him for an Hypocrite because he turned his Face to the Wall and wept. It is Folly and Sin to guess at the final State of any by any outward Circumstance. And it is a better Sign to fear, ordinarily speaking, than to be bold and confident. We rather need the help of one another's Sympathy and Prayers in that last Encounter. Fob wou'd not allow his Friends to judge of him had he dy'd in his Anguishes: He had nevertheless been the same upright persect Man, beloved of Heaven, and had gone to Glory from his Ashes, to infinite Joys from his unparaller'd Sorrows; * One dieth in his full Strength, being wholly at Ease and Quiet, his Breasts are full of Milk, and his Bones are moist ned with Marrow: And another dieth in the Bitterness of his Soul, and never eateth with Pleasure: They shall lie down alike in the Dust, and the Worms shall cover them. Behold I know your Thoughts, and the Devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me.

2. To conclude, we must not be void of Concern, now in our Health, how to pass our last Hour well. The more it employs our Thoughts now, the easier it will fit upon us hereafter. We can't live and act, it is true, as if we were immediately to die; for that wou'd fold up the Hands of Industry, Piery and Charity in our various Places in the World: But we may and shou'd live as daily remembring that we may die before to Morrow, and must die to be sure in a little time, which is a powerful Reason why we shou'd diligently redeem our short Time, and fill up every Minute of it with Work. By which Means also we shall make wonderful Advances and Dispatch Heaven-ward; the serious Contemplation of eternal Things making Men very spiritual and Heavenly: As Nations that border on one another learn each others Manners; fo a good Man becomes a Borderer on Heaven by his reallizing of Death and another World, he puts himfelf daily on the Brink of Eternity, and looks over into it, forming himself after that better Countrey, and the divine Laws and Manners of it.

seaven, and had gone to Glory from his Ale

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^{*} Job. 21. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. or shair I /d, wolls

MATTH. xxv. 8.

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And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

at the Alarm of the Midnight Cry, and doing their utmost to prepare themselves to receive the Bridegroom: But now comes under Consideration the Condition wherein the Foolish find themselves, after all possible Pains and Endeavours, in their Extremity, to trim and adorn themselves; they are found naked, polluted, destitute of True Grace, and in their Despair turn themselves to the Wise Virgins, (as in a desperate Case People snatch at any thing to save em, be it never so unlikely to avail them,) Give us of your Oil, &c.

The Petition or Request is of the Foolish to the Wise. Wicked Men now scorn the Good, who are not set off as they, with the Pageantry of the World: But hereafter how desirous will they be of their Company and Graces? Fain wou'd they then scrape Acquaintance, and be thought one of their Number: Then they will intrude among and hang upon them: Then the Rich Man will own Lazarus, and, in his turn, be the Beggar; lying at his Feet for a Drop of Comfort, or a Dram of Grace, as he did lately at his

Gate for a Crumb of Bread.

Give us of your Oil. Bestow some of your Grace upon us. They wou'd borrow of them who have their Souls well-furnished. Any sorry Shift, in their Distress, to relieve themselves: The Means next at hand, be it never so unlikely.

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They give the Reason of their Request, for our Lamps are gone out. Their feeming and temporary Faith fails, and will not abide the Trial. which Others had good Thoughts of, or which They themselves presum'd and built on, is now found vain, and vanishes away. It was forbidden under the Law to suffer the Lamps in the Tabernacle to go out, Aaron and his Sons were to order them from Morning to Evening before the Lord, to cause the Lamp to burn always *. So the Gifts and Graces of the Spirit of God should be cherish'd and preserv'd in his Temples, which Temples ye are: He has no Temple without a Lamp burning in it, and the pure Olive-Oil beaten to give Light: But he has many Mock-Temples, with Gilded Lamps in them, but no Oil, or not of the pure fort; these may blaze for the present, but will not last, for commonly they go out ere Death comes.

This is the Case of the Foolish Virgins, of whom we may observe, That they see and discern their own Want of Grace, are afflicted at it, and earnestly desire to partake of Saving Grace; for the gaining of which they wou'd take any vain Course, Give us of your Oil, &c.

There are Three or Four Notes I shall briefly

touch upon.

I. That an unfound Profession commonly betrays it self, if not before, yet when Death comes. Our Lamps are gone out. A Man may deceive himself and others a great while, but ordinarily he is laid open to Himself, if not exposed to the World, and not suffered to live and die in Ignorance, under the Power of a strange Presumption and Delusion. Profane Men and gross Hypocrites know

^{*} Exod. 27 29031 [Levit. 24. 2. Exod. 30. 7, 8.

their own State, live condemn'd by their own Consciences, and are very often discover'd to the Eve and Censure of the World. Others there may be possibly, who flatter themselves, and fondly hope to the last Gasp; expire calmly, born over the Waves of Death by Bladders of Wind, and will scarce believe it when they see the Judge frown on them, or when they hear him bid them depart, -Lord, have we not eaten, &c. But for the most part Death opens Mens Eyes. If Men have built their House on the Sand, this is the stormy Day wherein it will be blown down: Then the Rain falls, the Floods come, the Winds blow and beat upon him, and drive him from his flippery Ground, his Foolish Confidence. Then also the hardy Sinner, who wou'd not apprehend any Danger, has his Fears raised. So that whatever the Peace of the Wicked do now come of, advancing Death breaks it; moves the Fears of the Hardieft, and opens the Eyes of the Blinded; the deceived Man fees his Error, and the bold Sinner now trembles at his State: And now the Light of the Wicked is put out, and the Spark of his Fire shall not shine; the Light shall be dark in his Tabernacle, and his Candle shall be put out with him t: His Name in the World, and in the Church, shall be as an extinguish'd Lamp, which leaves only an illfighted Snuff and an offensive Smell. How oft is the Candle of the Wicked thus put out? And bow oft cometh their Destruction upon them? God distributeth Sorrows in his Anger. They are as Stubble before the Wind, and as Chaff that the Storm carrieth away. His Eyes (hall see his Destruction, and he shall drink of the Wrath of the Almighty. All this is true of remarkable Temporal Miseries, which sometimes befall Wicked Men in this Life, but

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[†] To allude to Job 18. 5, 6. & 21. 17, 18, 20,

most emphatically does it describe the Terrors into which generally Death does cast 'em.

Death rouzes the inattentive Person, whom heretofore Lust hurry'd on, without suffering him to think; and it removes many Foolish Errors and Prejudices which Lust deludes Men into. Death gives many a Man right Thoughts about the Way of Justification, and the Nature of the Work of Sanctification; it takes away from common Convictions the inordinate Esteem and Value sometimes put on 'em, and shows the Nakedness of the Man who has trusted to his own Righteousness, and neglected the Righteoulness which is by the Faith of Christ. The Conscience of the Wicked is broken up, and they feek no longer to hide their shameful Defects, they freely confess they bave no Oil: Despair cares not who fees or hears, nor what it tells. There is no End now to serve by Secrecy, no Gain to make of it, none to blind, nor any One's Esteem to court.

II. A Second Observation lying plainly in the Words is this, That Unregenerate Persons may see and be affected with their own Want of Saving Grace, and seem to themselves earnestly and seriously to desire it. Give us of your Oil, for our Lamps are gone out. They discern it, and bitterly complain of it, and carefully seek after a Supply.

1. Wicked Men may know their own State, and discern their naked and destitute Condition. They have a Rule to try and prove themselves by, and Understandings to examine and make a Judgment, and it is a Shame for any Men not to know their own Selves. Even common Convictions will let Men into this Knowledge; tho' it is only in effectual Calling that this is done to

pur-

purpose, the Spirit of God convincing Men of their Sin and Misery, their undone Condition. Yet the very Consciences of the Heathen do accuse and judge 'cm, and how much more is there the Knowledge of Sin by the Law? But barely to know our Sin and Wretchedness by it, is no more than what the Damned have, from whence arises their Rage and Anguish never to

be laid or eas'd.

2. Wicked Men may be affected with their wretched Condition. It is natural to Flesh and Blood to cry out at any threatning Evil near us. It may come only of the Principle of Self-Prefervation, a Horror of Nature, and servile Fear. As Cain's Concern |, and Pharaoh's Confession, and Judas's, whose Tragick End show'd that there was no Virtue in his Repentance and Restitution; and Simon Magus's Prayer. Men may roar out under Conviction, and yet there be no true Contrition in the case. Many have done fo, and yet liv'd to convince Themselves and the World of this Truth; resting, as it were, only to take breath, and by Abstinence for a while, to get a keener Appetite and higher Relish than ever before. No lasting Effects of Godly Sorrowing have follow'd, no abiding Zeal and Indignation against Sin as Sin, no Revenge taken of the Body of Sin by mortifying it and pursuing it to Death, no Carefulness or Solicitude to watch against every Motion of Lust for the future.

3. An Unregenerate Man may seem seriously and earnestly to desire Grace. Give us of your Oil. True Desires proceeding from Love to the Thing, are Indications of a Heart graciously in-

Gen. 4. 13, 14. Exod. 10. 17. Matth. 27. 3, 4, 5. Acts 8. 20—24.

clin'd: but there may be strong eager Cravings of a Good Thing upon Principles which are not gracious. It feems odd to fay, That there may be real Desires of Grace, and no gracious Principle; or, on the other hand, to fay, That because the Principle or Motive which excites this Defire is not gracious, therefore the Defire is not real. I think the Reality of the Defire is a thing quite different from the Graciousness of it; that there may be Desires of Grace which are not gracious. But if any, for this Reason. will call 'em only feeming, I am equally fatisfied.

Suppose the utmost Agony in the Prayers of a Dying Sinner for Grace, he anxiously cries after it, with imperuous Affections, as for his Life, as indeed it is; can we doubt or question his real Wishes after it? Well, but what is it moves him? Is it any Defire of Grace for its own fake? In all Probability Not; for it may be to this Hour he has liv'd irreligiously, hating to be reform'd: But in short, Fear and Self-Love move to it, there's present Happiness or Misery in the case, Salvation or Damnation; the natural Defire of the Soul is to Happiness, its invincible Dread is of Misery, which there's no escaping without Grace; and therefore that is defired not for it felf, no, but rather than Hell, for the fake of Flesh and Blood, which is in Horror to think of the Fire there. Cou'd the Man do without the Grace of God, he wou'd rather; Necessity is laid upon him, unless he cou'd be content to be miserable: This Nature can't be forc'd unto, therefore it yields to crave the loathed Remedy. All is to an improve the local to the local terms of t

To go a Step higher. A Wicked Man may be moved at times to wish for Holiness, from a bare Attention of the Mind to the Goodness and b muo

Excellency of the Thing in it felf. Natural Conscience may approve the Ways of Godliness as reasonable, amiable, desirable in themselves. A Man's Reason may be delighted with the Theory of Religion, it may commend it felf to his Mind, and yet not gain the Subjection of his Will and Affections, the Command of his Heart, and the Government of his Life; which is peculiar to Grace, its Empire, and the Token or Effect of its Reign. Where it does not pals to this Length and Efficacy, the Defire is weak and languid, and does not infer Grace in the Heart. There may be the common Workings of the Spirit, but not his Dwelling, temporary Affections in Holy Things, but no Union of the Soul to God. So the Stony-Ground Hearers receive the Word with foy, Herod heard the Baptist gladly, Agrippa was almost perfuaded, and Balaam wish'd to die the Death of the Righteous.

So then it is not by it felf alone a Sign of Grace, to fee that we have none, and be affected with the Sight, and defire Grace. Defires are often eafily come at, foon born, and, like untimely Births, foon expire. And generally they are poor and little, not adequate at all to the Immense Good, God and his Grace; foon fatisfy'd, as foon as we can but flatter our felves that we have any measure of Grace at all: of narrow Bounds, for a little Grace, as much as will bring us to Heaven: Not unequal'd and Supream as their Infinite Object; or flashy, shortliv'd, or for a Fit only; or of no Influence, like the Sluggard, who defireth and bath nothing *; or of no Prevalence, tho' they may put upon some faint Endeavours; short it may be of their Care who shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able +.

^{*} Prov. 13. 4. † Luke 13. 24.

But then, how bad are they that are not arriv'd even unto this, to see their Misery by reafon of Sin, and have some Desires after Holiness? And, under blacker Brands, yet they who are not affected at the Knowledge of their own Wretchedness? Who can live merrily, and it may be, die stupidly, tho' they know the Judgment of God, and themselves worthy of Death?

III. Another Note from the Word is, That there is no Shift so pitiful and filly, no Course fo vain and sensless, but corrupt Men, under Conviction, rather chuse to fall in with it, than the Holiness of God. So the Foolish Virgins in the Text go with the most absurd and ridiculous Request to the Wife, Give us of your Oil. Nothing cou'd be more filly and fenfless: Yet nothing more common than for Carnal Men to take fanctuary in Lies and Vanities. The most ludicrous Fancies of Men have been substituted in the room of Pure Religion, and Infinite Superstitions have usurp'd its Place and Name, its Throne and Dignity. This is Matter of Fact, notorious to all the World, for a Thousand Instances of which we need only look into the Papacy, whose Superflitions are innumerable, many whereof are ludicrous, and many horridly impious. It were tolerable if they had only continued the Follies of the Pharifees, whose Religion lay in Circumstances, Rites, Forms, and External Obfervances; in diverse Washings and Abstinences, which many Christians took up after them, Touch not, taffe not, handle not *: These were pretty harmless Follies, compar'd with those Doctrines of Devils + fince Canoniz'd, fuch as furbidding to marry, worshipping of Angels, Merit, and an over-

^{*} Col. 2. 18, 21. † 1 Tim. 4. 1, 3.

plus of it for those that have Money to buy, Absolution, Indulgences, &c. all which are obtruded for Religion, and are the spurious Issue of a Fleshly Mind, foisted into Christianity by fuch as cou'd not endure its Spirituality. Men had rather have a Religion of their Own than God's, whose Purity don't agree to their Fleshliness; which can submit to a Form, but not to an Inward Change. If a Tally of Prayers every Day wou'd do, or fo many Monthly and Annual Fasts, they cou'd away with it; if Bodily Exercise might pass for Godliness they cou'd be content to be Godly. Hence it is they can give their Estates to the Church, and their Bodies to the Lash, rather than mortify a Lust; to get a License for That, or to buy off Guilt, they spare neither their Money nor their Flesh: But to facrifice a Lust is a hard Lesson, harder than all Penances, Pilgrimages, Coarfe Cloaths, Hair Shirts, bard Lodging, or going bare-foot.

It is endless to attempt to fay, how many Ways Men have found out to get to Heaven, fo they might be spar'd the living holily. They have invented Auricular Confession, and the Priests absolving for Money; Indulgences and Pardons may be bought cheap, even many times by a fingle Visit to a Church or Image. A River of Oil wou'd pay for a Flood of Filthiness flowing down the Streets. For a Time all Religion lay in going to the Holy War. If a Man can't get a Spirit of Devotion, he shall have an easy and short Directory in lieu of it, to fay so many Ave-Maria's a Day, to kifs a Rag or Reliet of such a Saint, to cross himself, &c. If a Person be to prepare for Death, he need not diffress himself about his Spiritual State and Frame, and how to get his Heart changed; there are three or four Things he may eafily get done for him, and confidently trust in 'em: let him send for a Priest to Confess and Absolve him, and with the Extream Unction administer the Idoliz'd Waser, and all's well: It's true there is a seigned Fiery Purgation yet to pass thro', but a little Money will buy Masses enough to pass that too unhurt, not a Hair of their Heads singed, nor the Smell of Fire passing on them.

There are moreover many other Refuges of Lies for Wicked Souls in Death. As for Instance, To trust to a Righteousness of their own, the Perfection and Merit of many Good Works, and challenge Heaven as a Debt. Or if they have none done already, to do some now as they lie a dying, and carry the Church's Bill, just drawn upon God, in their Hand. That is, let them leave that Estate unto the Church, whereof they never devoted a Penny unto God in their Life. Or if they have not wherewithal to do this, there is another Hole to escape at, scil. the Super-erogation and over-plus Merit of Eminent Saints. which is laid up as a Stock for the Defects of Others, to the Virtue and Imputation of which they are taught to trust, it may be sometimes more than to the Righteousness of Christ: Which is indeed the very Folly of the destitute Virgins in the Text, who go to the Wife for some of their Oil; as if they had more Grace than they needed for themselves, whereof Others might borrow and be faved. But if this be too gross, (as indeed it it is for Any one that knows any thing of the Gift of God, or has but look'd into his Word,) yet Diffressed Sinners, as they die, try other Ways as eafy and vain, to get to Heaven by. They can't get an humbled, bleeding Heart for Sin, nor the Love of God, and Faith in Christ, and a New Nature; but they can at last comfort themselves in the Mercies and tender

der Pity of God, and cast themselves on it; they die presuming, as the Foolish Virgins calling on the Bridegroom, Lord, Lord, open to us. And indeed this is as easy a way to be saved as any I have named before, and as insignificant and aliene from the Spirit of the Gospel, as the Pa-

rable teaches us, Ver. 12.

Death may terrify by staring on us, but cannot make Repentance, Faith and Holiness pleasing or possible. But if a Minister cou'd do the Work for us by his Prayers and Instructions, this would please Men: And indeed it is to be fear'd that Some rest too much on this, as Others do on receiving the Sacrament. And moreover, People are for gentle and smooth Words, and a soft Hand then to touch their Sores, and any Word of Hope to float on, as a Plank thrown to a Man in a Stormy Sea, which he gets upon, tho' it will preserve him from sinking only for a Day or an Hour.

But let us consider the Reasons why any such forry Shifts please Men rather than the One only sufficient Way, which God has laid out in his

Word.

-Harly

And certainly these are not equally approved to Men's own Reason and Consciences. It is wonderful they shou'd seem to credit and honour 'em, with how partial an Eye soever they look on their own soolish Fancies and Devices, as if they were indeed of God, and corrected his Word: but so Idolaters use to hack a Log, and then fall down and worship what just before they tumbled in the Dirt. Some Men only look at the Salvation of the Soul, not its Perfection, nor the Glory of God in its Salvation. They regard not any native Beauty and Goodness of a Religious Obedience, they put it not to their own Hearts,—Does this really honour God, and

and better my Soul? Has he requir'd this at my Hands, and will he be pleased with it? But they blindly act as if the Deity were all Will and Power and nothing more, and so Religion were any External Sign and Act of Homage, indifferent in it self, and to be determin'd by the Customs of Places and Authority of Men. But this is not all:

For, The Carnal Part is also consulted by Superstitious Men; and no wonder then if any thing shall pass for Religion rather than Holiness. It loves Sin and Sloth, and will chuse that Way which will most indulge the one, and

least dif-rest the other.

Men wou'd keep their Sins, and fave their Souls too, if they cou'd. A Religion so fram'd suits 'em admirably. They'll come to Terms with God, and if he'll spare them a little, they'll, after a sort, serve him. If Heaven might be reconcil'd to their Lusts, it wou'd be a fine thing indeed to tell of. Mahomet's Paradice is a charming Imagination to a Sensual Fool. Nay, rather than fail, if Purgatory will burn off the Soul's Pollutions, 'tis moderately well; Heaven and Sin may meet at last, and Flesh and Blood may, with some difficulty, be content with the Scheme.

Moreover, Men wou'd favour Carnal Sloth, and yet obtain Heaven; and the Superfictions of Men do perfectly contrive this: to go to Heaven asseep, on a Feather-bed as we say. For whereas True Religion is a laborious Duty, Superstition is lazy and easy. This may seem a strange Affertion, and I must explain my self upon it. I confess the Inventions of Men have been always harder than the Precepts of God: God has been ever merciful to His Worshippers, the Devil more cruel to His, and Men to Themselves, when-

whenever they have fram'd a Religion to Themfelves. The Usages of Idolatry ever were, and are, bloody and inhumane, while the Laws of the True God are gracious: He never commanded his Priests to cut and gash themselves, nor his People to make their Seed pass thro the Fire *. And so likewise the Doctrines of Antichrist are cruel if compar'd to the easy and light Toke of Christ. He never so squeez'd Mens Purses, nor flea'd their Backs, nor call'd for the Farigue and Sweat of Pilgrimages, &c. You will fay then, In what respects are the Laws of Religion more against Men's Sloth than these painful Superfitions? To which I answer, That the Carnality of Men makes all these Bodily Severiries more tolerable to them than Holiness. It is less Pain to a corrupt Nature to bear outward Mifery than inward Holiness. And there are thefe Two Reasons of it.

First, The Enmity of a Wicked Heart to Holinefs. Luft has wrought it felf (as it were) into the very Soul: Flesh and Blood are not fo dear as Sin naturally. Men will venture on Sickness and Deaths too for a Lust, and put their Eternity on the utmost Hazards. They seem to think their Corruptions only Themselves, as indeed the Scripture calls it the Old Man, and the Regenerate Person it calls a New Creature. If therefore to cut off a Right Hand, or to pluck out a Right Eye, be hard to Flesh and Blood, more is it to corrupt Nature to give up its own Life. A Holy Doctrine or Precept goes to the

Heart and strikes at the Life of Sin.

Secondly, There is a natural Impotence to what is Holy and Good, whereas there may be

Deut. 14 1. 1 Kings 18. 28. Levit. 18.21. Jer. 32. 35. Ezek. 16. 20, 21.

natural Courage, Resolution and Strength for the External Acts of Religion, and for all the Superflitious Practices which some Men call Religion. Any Man may play the Pharisee and act the Formalist without going out of Himself: but he can't root out of his Heart the Love of Sin when he lift, nor refift and suppress the Stirrings of Lust at Pleasure. 'Tis out of his Power to cure the Pravity of his Affections, or to cross violent Inclinations, impetuous Passions, and hungry importuning Appetites. He may do every Superstition of a Papist, turn Pilgrim or Hermit, and punish the Body for the Sin of the Soul: but to hate Sin and abandon it, and live holily, and worship God in Spirit, are quite another thing. A Man has also a natural Power over his Perfon and Goods; if he has a Heart big enough, he may give his Body to be burn'd, and bestow all his Goods to feed the Poor; but he can't command for himself the Grace of Charity, or fill his Heart, when he please, with the Love of God and his Neighbour. It is ftory'd of the Idolatrous People in the East-Indies, That they have a natural Boldness, Hardiness, and Resolution, voluntarily to undergo the most exquifite Torments, in Honour to their Idols; these they inflict upon Themselves, and place much Religion in it: But if the Gospel were receiv'd among 'em, cou'd they mortify a Lust with the same Power and Constancy? God teaches us otherwise, and we know that no Man can. The Spirit of a Man can do and bear much, as to Things that are meerly Humane; but to change a Sinner's Heart is a Divine Work, and peculiar to God. Superstitions are laborious and painful, but to Us, as corrupt, Spiritual Duties are more so; because, however outwardly dolorous the first are, the last are least indulgent The to Inward Carnality.

The Use of which is, 1. To teach us the Perverseness and Infatuation of Men thro' Sin-What a prodigious Enmity is this to the Holiness of God, that Men can be brought to fall down to any fortish Invention, rather than to submit to That. And what Blindness, together with Depravedness, does it infer, that Men can ever think and call their wanton Superstitions by the Name of Holy. That ever fuch Things should pass for Religion with reasonable Creatures, as the meer Out-fide does with the Formalist, a thousand Fopperies, as well as gross Idolatries, with the Papist and Pagan. This Sortishness was most notorious in Israel, whom nothing cou'd preserve from the most barbarous Worships of their Neighbours; no Mercies, no Miracles; no Appearances of God himself, in Majesty and Terror, in Mildness and Grace: Tho' he destroy'd Egypt, and confounded their Magicians in their Sight; tho' he divided the Seas before them, and led them by a Cloud and a Pillar of Fire; tho' he gave them miraculous Victories, and the Sun it self food still to look on their Pursuit; nay, tho' he descended in a visible Glory, and gave them his Will in Thunders, and so far indulg'd them with a Ritual Dispensation and Pompous Worship, to prevent. their hankering after the Superstitions of Idols; yet cou'd not this People be kept from every fortish Idolarry at times. It becomes Us to bewail our felves under every Symptom of the Strength and Rootedness of Sin in us, and the fad Deliriousness we are naturally under about Things Sacred and Spiritual. Mean while it should caution us always to bear in mind how Inward a thing Religion is, and not to rest in Forms, in the Outward Act, in Ordinances, but in them to get our Souls carried above them.

2. At the same Time we learn the Necessity of being well grounded in the Truth, and dutifully attending to it. We ought greatly to value and honour the Holy Scripture, as the only Treasury of Sacred Knowledge, and to try every Principle or Doctrine which Men wou'd at any time obtrude on us by this Test, as Gold is proved by the Fire, and as every Man's Work shall be proved at last *. As therefore we wou'd not be impos'd upon and mif-led, by the Craft of Men manag'd by Satan, who is fubtle to deceive, let us prize the Scripture, fearch it with all Diligence and Humility, adhere to it with Courage and Fidelity, and be infinitely thankful for it t. Remember our Saviour's Words If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth (hall make you free.

2. Let us be very thankful to God, who has put us fo far out of the way of this Tempration; out of the Reach and Power of those that vend their Own Will and Fancy for the True Doarine and Worship of Christ. God be praised, that we were not born and educated in Popilh Countries, where we shou'd have liv'd in Ignorance, had the Scripture kept from us, and every corrupt Doctrine inflill'd into us from our Infancy. We are deliver'd out of Spiritual Sodom and Egypt, where we should have been bred up to worlhip Images and Saints, to parrot over Prayers we understand not, and never should have understood the Spirituality of Religion: We shou'd have learn'd their Errors and their Manners, and been led blind-fold, by blind and crafty Guides, to the Pit. It is an unspeakable

^{* 1} Cor. 3. 12, 13, 14, 15. † 1. 21. Col. 2. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. 7, 8, 9. || John 8. 31. 18. 37.

Mercy not to have been cast into those Places where Errors are so lewdly, impudently, shamelefly vended under the Name and Shew of Sancity: where God is not worshipp'd in Spirit. and where we shou'd have lost the Notion of Moral Evil it felf, knowing no greater fleshly Pollution than to eat Flesh in Lent or on a Fish-Day. But the Bible is in your Hands and Houses, and faithfully explained in our Churches *, and bleffed are your Eyes for they see, and your Ears for they hear t. A Mercy which Millions will envy us another Day, and regret for themselves, tho' it may be we little prize it now. How many poor Souls may think and fay, If we had had the Bible in our Hands we should never have come hither, if we had had Mofes and the Prophets we should have heard them, had we had a Protestant Education and learned faithful Pastors to have shown and led us in the right Way we shou'd never have stray'd hither! But what shall we fay, if we perifh under our Advantages? Of. and their Souls to the other. ! at viiq lliw onw

But so much for the sensels Course the foolish Virgins take to get Grace, as if they thought with Simon Magus that the Holy Ghost cou'd be purchas'd with Money, or that Grace were the Property of the Saints which they cou'd make a Gift and Loan of, and it wou'd be a noble Piece of Charity to do it: And it is notorious that a great part of the Christian World have fallen in with something very like this extravagant Conceit, I mean the Romish Charch, whose Fooleries a deluded World has wander'd after, being brought to credit the most glaring Lyes, and reverence the idlest Fables, and worship hideous, implous

And the is not of the Matth. tar 100 100 160 in

Monsters. There is yet a fourth Observation which I will just hint at.

A with a hour bobas v what IV. That it is especially the Property of a Soul in Anguish, as it will be when it comes to fee its Cafe desperate, to lay hold on any Thing for fafety be it never fo helpless. This is the very Case and Action of the foolish Virgins in the Text, and if it come to our Turn to die in their Despair (which God forbid) we may look for their Distraction, and shall act as Creatures frighted out of all Sense, wildly looking about for any Thing to catch at, which will never fo little flatter us with a Promise of Affistance. As a drowning Person (they say) will cling to any thing he finds at the Bottom, though it be the certain way to keep him from ever rifing again.

In a desperate Case Men submit to any thing to fave Body or Soul: they that have never had any Esteem of the Physician or the Minister either, use both then, and leave their Bodies to the one, and their Souls to the other. Let the Doctor pour down what Drenches he pleases, and scarrife and blifter the Body as he will, he is thank'd and rewarded for his Pains; and let the Divine fearch the Soul or footh it, let him prescribe severely 'tis born, tho' Cordials, that do nourish the Diseafe and increase the foulnesses of the Stomach,

are doubly priz'd. if break and ob the visited to

In a desperate Case we catch at what is next at Hand, run to the best present Refuge, the next Hole or Corner; for there's no time to wait for Succours at a distance, nor to retreat far to a Place of fafety: but if any thing offers that can be done this Instant, and Advantage made of on the Spot, that we immediately fly to and improve to the utmost.

And this is not from any great Confidence in nold.

the thing or Expectation from it, for he that is desperate will try that which he does not really think probable or likely to help him: something must be done in the Extremity, and Despair will go upon the least Accident, as the Lepers of Samaria fell to the Host of the Syrians upon this bare Peradventure, If they save us alive we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die.

A desperate Case causes extream Fears, and these hurry Men to any thing. Fear is a distracting Passion, and deprives Men of the use of Reason, disables them for Consideration, and drives 'em to the most impossible Methods, like Judas into

the very Flames for Ease.

Finally, Defire also is then high and eager, and in this Fever and Ferment of the Soul, as it is not capable of considering the right way, so it is greedy after some be it never so wrong. Fear will fly to something be it but a Twig, and Desire is restless till it grasp something tho it be but a Rope of Sand.

This is the Nature and Property of desperate Anguish, and I might produce several Scripture-Instances wherein it is thus related and represented to us; and these of two sorts, Men in this

Life and Souls departed.

Of the first I will name two, scil. Adam and King Saul *. It has been the Folly of Guilt from the beginning; the first time that ever a Sinner thought his Judge near he betook himself to some filly Refuge; Leaves that cou'd not cover or shield him! Fig-leaves his Armour and a Thicket of shady Trees his Castle! And no doubt like to make a long and stout Desence against the Hosts and Artillery of Heaven and the Arm of Omnipotence; or, to be safely

mothim.

^{*} Gen. 3. 8, 10. 1 Sam. 28. 15, 16.

skreen'd from the All-seeing Eye of God. And yet such have been the Retreats of the Sons of Adam unto this Day, when Conscience has ar-

raigned 'em.

When King Saul was in his Terrors, (forfaken of God, and threatned by the Philistine Army) unto what foolish Courses did he betake himfelf, either to know his Fate or to fave himself and Kingdom? He feeks to a Witch to bring him up Samuel. What cou'd he propose from this horrid Act? The best Account of it is, That Despair carried a brave and mighty Prince to feek Help of a Creature when God forfook him. Nay, more abfur'd was his Course than this barely; as if he hop'd the Saint wou'd befriend him tho' God wou'd not, and he goes to the Devil by his Means to get the eminent Prophet's Affiftance. Samuel was in Heaven, Saul goes to the Suburbs of Hell to find him: Wou'd Samuel come thought he at the Devil's Call? Or, wou'd he for his fake defert the Lord of Glory, which he never wou'd do while he was on Earth? Or, by the glorified Propher's Interest in Heaven did he hope to obtain the Lord's propitious Return to him? - But what will not the Anguishes of a despairing Heart imagine and attempt!

Moreover the Scripture represents as great Frenzy to be found in Souls departed, as if these cou'd make wild and sensies Essays to recover themselves. A thing inconceivable and scarce possible to be apprehended, that Souls really pass'd out of this World, and that know their Condition in the other fixed, shou'd however try against their hopeless State. The Parable supposes that the Foolish see their Lamps gone out, and hear themselves denied by the Wise, and see the Dours of the Bride-Chamber shut against them, and yet they dare to knock and plead for Admission.

mission. It is in another Place intimated as if they wou'd even dare to ask, when and how they had offended against him, and why there is no Confideration had of what they have done for him, when they have eaten and drank in his Presence, &c t. As if they wou'd ftand on their Juffification and make a fort of Defence; and when they have nothing elfe to fay, will in a fortish Manner plead their Privileges and Profeffion, the very Thing that will procure 'em the greater Damnation. And while some try to reverse their Face by piercing Cries, and others by infolent and diffracted Pleas, a third fore fly to Courses equally betraying their Terrors and Befortedness, as if they cou'd hide themfelves from the Eye of God, or the Rocks cou'd hear and help 'em, and wou'd be softned by those Cries which the Merciful Jesus can hear and not pity. The proudest Mortals in their Anguish run to these wretched Shifts ||, the Kings of the Earth, and the Great Men, the Rich, the Chief Captains, and the Mighty. Bereft of Reason and difabled to Confider, they forget the flaming Eye of God, his Justice, Truth and Power. same Thing is represented in the Parable of the rich Man and Lazarus *; the rich Man is supposed to be in Hell, and there to lift up his Eyes and fee Abraham afar off in a state of Glory and Blifs, and now in his Anguish, being in Torments, he puts up feveral foolish Prayers. He begs for some little Eafe of his insufferable Pains, for a Drop of Water to cool his Tongue, fo much only as a Man can bring away on the Tip of his Finger when he has dipp'd it, and that Lazarus might be sent to bring him this small Refreshment. The Petition

[†] Matth. 25, 24. Luke 13, 26. || Rev. 6, 15, 16, 17.

feigned of him informs us of the real Distraction of the wretched Ghosts in Hell through their Anguish. That a Moment's Ease shou'd be look'd for in Hell! That the fix'd and unpassable Gulph shou'd be forgotten! That it shou'd be thought it lay with Abraham to shew him Mercy! Or, that Lazarus shou'd come from his Rest and Glory to minister to one whom God had rejected and ordained to these Torments! What means the poor Soul in all these wild and imposfible Thoughts? Why, be faw Abraham - fays the Parable; he lays hold on any Thing that comes in his way, whatever Fancy can paint his Anguish wishes, and all his Wishes he puts in form, be they never fo abfurd; as one raving mad between Defire and Defpair. And no wonder now that dying Men catch at every foolish ground of Hope, when even after Death they will scarce let 'em go; their Mind the same when they rife again, as it was when Death closed their Eyes; no Improvement being to be made, nor Wisdom got in Hell, which instead of curing adds to their Frenzy.

UsE. Let us then learn the Madness of trusting to a dying Hour to do the great Work of our Souls in; when Anguishes must be look'd for, and Confusion and Distraction. Now in the Calm of Life do your Work, that you may have a bleffed Peace and Calm when you come to die. Death is not Gastly but as Doubts and distressing Fears make it so. But the Dolours of Despair then cannot be set out in Words, nor be feen without Horror. And yet this is like to be the Case of the Foolish, who will see themselves destitute of Grace. Realize it, O Graceless Soul! 'tis like to be thy own Case, and to which of the Saints wilt thou turn? You will either fink or go wailing bangial

wailing to Hell, or presume against Sense and Scripture, and lay hold on some Twigg or other, which will not bear your weight, and yet you

hang by it over the bottomless Pit.

Few Sinners can live without their Refuges of Lyes, but less can they die without them. And when the Grace of God and the Promises in Christ Jesus are out of reach, you may turn to your Godly Friends to do something for you, but their Grace can't be lent, and God knows their Prayers will little avail you, if you do not receive from him Grace of your own. At the best you can but call on the Merciful Jesus, as the foolish Virgins at last bethought themselves after they had try'd in vain to borrow and to buy; but this also prevails nothing, for he has plainly told us ||, Te shall seek me, and shall die in your Sins.

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MATTH. XXV. 9.

But the wife answered, faying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you:

In the last Discourse the Request of the Foolish to the Wife was considered and the Sensiches of it; begging a Loan of their Grace, &c. And now you read part of the Answer of the Wife to their Petition, which is a flat and absolute Demail, together with the Reason of it; Not so, less

there be not enough for us and you.

It is a positive Refusal, Nor so. These Words are not in the Original, but very firly inserted in our Translation, the Greek bearing the Ellipsis better than our Language. The Denial is plainly imply'd in the following Words, lest there be not enough, &c. for it must needs be understood thus—'No, we can't impart the least Measure of that Oil we have, for we have but enough, if

enough, for our felves.

This Denial is not from the Will of the Wife, but from the Nature of the Thing. They wou'd have been willing to have feen the foolish Gracious, and glad at their Hearts to have been Inftrumental toward their saving Conversion. A good Man has a high Love to Souls and Regard to the Glory of God, and therefore rejoyces in and wou'd contribute his utmost to the Salvation of all Men: This is the Spirit of an Apostle, and to be spirited indeed as God is t, who desires not the death of the Sinner, but wou'd

^{*} Rom. 10. 1. 1 Theff. 2. 16. † 1 Tim. 2. 4. Ezek. 18. 23.

have all Men to be faved, and to come unto the know-

ledge of the truth.

So that here is no unkind Refufal of any thing possible, fitting or lawful to be ask'd; but of the possibility of the Thing, it being absurd to propole or crave it; and of the lawfulness of the Supposal: q. d. Do you think that we have any Grace to spare? Or, that Grace is in our Gift, at our Dispose? A vile and horrid Imagination! Pray to God if the thought of thine Heart may be for-

given thee.

Left there be not enough for us and you. This must be understood more positively than the Expresfion feems to import: there is no Doubt made or allowed, but it is a full Affertion of the Thing. that every Man is to be faved by a Faith of his own, that the Grace of one Man cannot fave another : That no Man can do more than he ' needs for himself by way of Preparation for another World, and that it is an idle and wicked Conceit which some have enterrain'd, as ' if there were an Over-plus of Grace and Merit in some to supply the Defects of others. So that the Doctrine here taught is this.

That no Saint has any Grace to spare, or more than he needs for his own Salvation; nor can he of others affign or transfer all or any part of what he has to the Salvation of another. Or. which is the same Thing in other Words, that there are not not can be any Works of Supererrogation done by the most Eminent of God's Children; nor may one Man expect to fare the better in the last Day by the Sanctity of another vo taling of the section

I. No Child of God has any Grace to spare, or has ever done or can do more than he needs for his own Salvation: Or, there is no fush Safates thing

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thing as any Work of Super-errogation ever done, or possible to be done by the most eminent Saint. For the Proof of this, what can be more direct and plain than those Words of our Saviour *. When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say - we are unprofitable Servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. Beyond this no Man can go, nor indeed can any one fully come up to it; or, cou'd any one exceed it and do more than his Duty, it wou'd be a complementing God in a vain and wretched Manner and lying to him. Which indeed agrees well enough to the forced Interpretation which the Patrons of Merit put on the Words, who bring it at last to a feigned affected Humility, fay fo indeed in Decency and Modesty: But certainly the Great God likes not any fuch false and empty Fiction, contrary to what we think and feel, if indeed we have done more than is our Duty to do: He defires Truth in the inward part, and that when we fay before him we are unprofitable Servants, we do with deep Abasement feel our selves to be fo. And it is very observable that it is the same Word used in the 30th Verse of the Chapter, Cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outward Darkness. The best Men find enough in themselves to make 'em rank themselves among the vilest Sinners: Of whom I am chief, faid the Chief of Saints. We find none of the Worthies on Sacred Record boafting of their Attainments or vaunting what they have done for God; but bewailing and lamenting their Emptiness, Poverty, Insufficiency, Impotence, Sinfulness and Wretchedness. The Apostle ascribes not at all to himself even what he was t, and in the Judgment-Day the crowned

^{*} Luke 17. 10. † 1 Cor. 15 10. Matth. 25. 37. Luke

Saints not only not name their good Works, but when their Judge shall do 'em this Honour, they think their poor Services over-rated, Lord, when saw we thee, &c! q. d. Never did we any thing worthy to be named thus, never did we that which was our Duty to do, we blush that we have done no more for thy Glory, or shou'd our Master thank us had we done all those Things which were commanded us? How distant is this Language from theirs — Lord, we have Grace enough and to spare, and have in our Lives even exceeded what is required in thy Law.

Consider what that Obedience is for kind and degree which Christ requires. He came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to establish and fulfil it, and explain the Spiritual Meaning and Obligation of it further than Men underflood it before. He requires Integrity and Perfection, which fignifies not barely an upright Mind and undiffembled Intention and Defire, opposed to Hypocrifie and a feigned Pretence of Religion; but also an Endeavour after a 'Compleatness of Obedience which were it ' possible might exclude Defects; as St. James speaks, That ye may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing. This has been distinguish'd thus, 'Inte-'grity of the Object, Time, and Subject; i. e. of the whole Law (a), at all Times (b), and with the whole Man (c). So that Respect must be had to all the Commandments, perseveringly and continually, and this in Thought, Defire, Word and Action; with utmost Zeal, Earnestness, Life, Activity, Industry. We are required to 'place

⁽a) Deut. 6. 25. Pfalm 119 6. Matth. 28 20. (b) Ezek. 18. 24. John 8. 31. (c) Matth. 22. 37.

our total Content in God, to do all Things as to him, to have a perfect Resignedness to his

Will, and a vigorous Faith and Confidence in him in all Wants, Diffresses and Temptations;

to maintain constantly a Feryour of Spirit, a Steadiness of Resolution, and an abstracted

'Mind from the World: An undistracted Fervency of Devotion also, and an incessant Guard on our Thoughts, Passions, Appetites, Speech,

Behaviour †.

This is the exceeding Breadth of the Divine Law, and is any Man able perfectly to keep it? * What Patriarch, Prophet or Apostle? Had St. Paul attained? Did the Man after God's own Heart never transgress? Cou'd St. John say—I have

no Sin?

You will say then, Why are we bid to be perfeet? Because the Obligation to be so can never cease or be removed. No? not when Perfection is now impossible to us in our fallen state? Nevertheless our Bond remains; for the Impotence and Poverty we have brought on our felves can never discharge us from our Debt, or take away God's Right. But is it not abfurd to call upon us now to be Perfect? Not at all in the manifest Sense of the Gospel, which is— that we labour after it to the utmost-, and furely we may do that : we may frive, and press on, and do all that is possible for us in our imperfect State. But is this strictly and properly to be Perfect? No truly, but God gracioully calls and accounts it so, of his meer Mercy and our Redeemer's Merits: we durst not have given it any such Name, for we know but in part, and are holy in part, and comparing our felves with the Law we are an unclean Thing and our Righteousness a filthy Rag.

[†] Dr. Barrow. * Ecclef. 7. 20. 1 John 1. 8, 10.

One Passage of Scripture must be interpreted by another, or we shall make sad Confusion. We find those styled Perfect, of whose great Infirmities or Sins we also read. The Haly Ghost calls Jab a perfect Man, yet fays the holy Man of himself, If I justifie my self, my own Mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse. You know David's great Sins, yet God gave him this glorious Character, bore him this Testimony in his Vision to Solomon, If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy Father walked in Integrity of Heart, and in Uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded. Thus one part of Scripture explains another, or we make God the Author of Confusion. For when in one Place he concludes all Men under Sin, and leaves us Records of the Failings and the Falls of his eminent Saints; and yet in another Place fays of em, That they were just, perfect, upright Men, who followed him with their whole Heart, and commends them to us as Patterns for our Imitation if we wou'd be Perfect too; how can we ever reconcile these Things, but by allowing a willing Mind failing in many Things and coming fhort in every Thing to be explanatory of the perfect Heart. And then the Language of Scripture agrees to our Experience, which tells usthat if this may not denominate a Man good and holy, there is none fuch on Earth.

But what shall we say of what some call Heroick Piety, or excelling Degrees and Eminencies of Devotion and Goodness, as we know that some Saints do mightily surpass others? Are not these more than is commanded, Counsels rather than Precepts, for many that come not up to them

may be upright Men and go to Heaven.

Now granting that Eminency of Grace may deserve this Name of Heroick Goodness, or any other

other equally Illustrious, yet the Thing in its Explanation may be very harsh and offensive to a humble Christian's Ear. As, to say that such Inftances of Devotion or Charity are 'not Parts of our Duty, but voluntary Oblations above our Duty, that they are Instances of Generosity, &c. A Word that grates in the Ears, and clashes with the State of a Creature and a Sinner, who owes his Lord ten thousand Talents which must be freely forgiven him. We owe our All to God; 'The most passionate Applications of Seraphick Love, the most Extatick Joy and ' Complacency in him, holy Transports of Zeal and Adoration, numerous and earnest Returns of Prayer, the referring our common Actions to his Glory, extraordinary Works of Charity, &c ||. Nor am I against calling these Heroick or Angelical, they are so; yet not the Ardors of Seraphims at last, but of Men, in all which there are Defects and Mixtures of Sin, and therefore failing of bounden Duty.

The brightest of all the visible Lights of Heaven has its Spots, and so have the most shining Saints; among whom there are different Glories, not that some do more than they need or are obliged unto; but that some do fall much shorter than others and yet with all their Desects are Sincere. It's true, Sincerity shall save those that have so many more Desects than others, and the excelling Goodness of others will crown them with greater Glories another Day; yet it is Integrity that saves one or other, and not the Works of either, for both have after all come short of their Duty; otherwise Abraham were justified by Works, and bath whereof to glory before

God.

^{||} The Ingenious Mr. Norris, Miscel. p. 219.

Who can plead his Actions throughout Good and Right, not failing in Kind, in Manner, or Degree? Of that Ardency of Affection, that Purity of Intention, that Vigour of Spirit, and Undistractedness of Mind, wherewith our Duty shou'd be performed? 'Can we pick out a Sacrifice entire and unblemish'd in all our Flock? One that needs not to pass through the Hands of our holy and undefiled High-Priest? Had you kept every Commandment any one Day of your lives, can you think the same of every other? And if every Precept were observed, has it been without the least Defect, with the whole Force and Might of the Soul? These are the Bounds of our Duty, exceeding broad.

Us E. Let us learn profound Humility and Selfabasement before God, and the Necessity of a better Righteousness than our own to be justified by. We must lay our selves and our Services low, that the Righteousness of Christ and the free Grace of God may be exalted. Indeed we must not deny the Obligation of the Divine Law, or the Necessity of Inherent Holiness, that so we may be saved by Grace; which is a Shew of Humility that the Gospel does not countenance but abhor; yet this becomes us, when we have done our best in way of Obedience, not to build on, or boast of it, but to rate it as a Rag and a filtby one too.

The best of Saints have been the bumblest. How vile they to themselves, how lowly their Thoughts, while Heaven has valu'd them and spoken Magnificently of them! How deep their Penitence in their best Attainments, rating and demeaning themselves as the chief of Sinners! While the Patrons of any proud Doctrines, relating to the Justification of Sinners, have been branded

in the Church from the Days of St. John. The Gospel was soon insulted by high Pretenders, and tho' the Apostles in their Time pass'd the Condemnation of such dangerous Errors, yet in every Age some take up the cast Gauntlet, against the Bible, their own Experience, and all Modesty.

It is an uncontroulable Evidence of the Pride that is naturally in Man: that 'a Creature of fuch wretched Impotency and Impurity, examining and comparing himfelf by the Rules of ' his Duty, shou'd ever be satisfied in himself and ' his own Doings: when he looks within him-' felf and plainly finds his Mind pefter'd with ' vain and evil Thoughts; his Will perverse, froward, weak, unsteady; his Desires fond and unwarrantable, his Passions disorderly and ungovernable, his Affections milplac'd or cold in regard of right Objects, his Resolutions toward Good so weak and flack, his Intentions so corrupt and mix'd with oblique Regards; his Actions rising from ill Principles, or driving at ill Ends, and failing greatly in the Manner of performing them: Here may be cause for Abhorrence, but never for Self-admiration †.

Let us fettle our selves on this Truth, That we must be saved at last of free Grace, and by Faith in the Worthiness of Christ, who is of God made unto us Righteousness. This is a Doctrine full of Comfort to a Sinner that is vile and condemned in his own Conscience; who sees the Law of God exceeding broad, and himself deficient and guilty of the Breach of it all; empty of Grace and concluded under Sin: but it is displeasing Talk to a vain and arrogant self-righteous Person, who had rather have a Farthing of his own getting than a Treasure of God's giving, and

¹ The Words of the excellent Dr. Barrow.

tho' he's beholden to God for his Being, yet according to that lewd Pelagian Aphorism, ' his Goodness is of himself; which instead of thanking God for, he rather thinks God beholden to him for.

But blessed be God, We have not so learned Christ! But look to be saved by Grace, through Faith, and that not of our own, it is the Gift of God: Not of Works lest any Man shou'd boast, for we are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained that we shou'd walk in them*.

II. No good Man can affign or transfer, nor can others for him, any part of the Grace he has to the Account and Benefit of another; nor may any Man expect in the last Day to fare the better for the Sanctity of another. Many Things might be faid to prove this Conceit both wicked and impossible, unlawful and abfurd to imagine or attempt. The known and flated | Rule of the last Judgment absolutely forbids it. It is highly derogatory to the Satisfaction and Righteouineis of Christ, and robs him of the Glory peculiarly his Due as Mediator; of whose precious Blood there had not been that waste, if other Ways of less Expence might have been for the Salvation of Sinners; whose Merits and his Saints wou'd be so jumbled together, and the one laid on a Level with the other; the Prince un-hors'd to walk a Foot with the Servant, or the Servant mounted to ride by the Side of his Prince; the Prerogative taken from the Soveraign, and his Crown put on the Vassal's Head. Nor does it agree to the Nature of Grace, to be imparted or

^{* 1} Cot. 1. 30. Eph. 2. 8, 9, 10. || Ezek. 18. 20. 2 Cor. 3. 10. Rev. 20. 13. Rom. 14. 12.

affigned from one to another, inafmuch as it is the Gift and Operation of God in us; fo that it must be a Divine Power to put it into the Soul. and a Divine Right to dispose of it. No Man can come at another's Heart, nor indeed change his own. To make Holy is the Prerogative of God: 'Tis therefore call'd a New Creation; A Word above any finite Strength, and can never be used of a Creature without Blasphemy, save in a very lax and abused Sense. But if the Thing were possible, yet had we no Right to alienate any Part of the Mercy and Grace of God to us; which wou'd be to impoverish our selves after God had enrich'd us, and profanely with Esau to sell his Blessing, wickedly suffering our selves to be supplanted. It wou'd be a profane Thing were it possible; so that the Nature of Grace forbids it.

Moreover, This Imagination of benefiting others by a Loan out of our Righteoufness, wou'd cherish the Vices of Pride and Sloth: Pride in them that pretend to communicate it, and Sloth in them that depend on receiving. ' Pride and Indigence do too often meet in People, low in Condition but lofty in Opinion. wou'd be Fountains, to be obsequiously followed by others, to drink of those Rivers of Living Waters flowing out of their Bellies. Dropsical Souls, whose Bulk is their Disease and Misery, and must burst if they swell so t. The All-sufficient Redeemer, in whom is the Fulness of God, alone bespeaks us thus, If any Man thirst, let him come

unto me and drink.

bonani

There are again flothful Drones who wou'd be glad to be idle, and that others should work for them: As many a Prodigal Son spends without

[†] Luk. 18. 9. Mat. 23. 9.

Thought, having the Care, Industry and Affection of a Parent to trust to for Supplies. It is in Effect, to invite People to be idle, to tell 'em of a foreign Care that shall be had of their Salvation: Your tender Mother (the Church) knoweth that ye have need of all these Things! But verily this is not of God, which wou'd cherish Pride in one Man, or Laziness in another.

Finally, This Doctrine of a comfortable Overplus in some, communicable to others for their Salvation, is attended with other ill Principles of the worst Influence that can be. I shall hint at a few out of many, and their pernicious Tendency: For Errors go in Troops and many must be admitted to defend and support one. So it is here, for the Doctrine of Super-erogation once admitted, the next Thing to be confider'd is -What to do with this Over-plus of Grace, in whose Hand to deposit it for the common Good: Presently, the Church claims it, and the Pope affumes to himself the Right and Power to dispense it in Parcels here and there: Peter's Key unlocks the Treasury, but not without a good Fee for turning it which were it indeed offered to the Saint, instead of firiking a Bargain and making the Sale, he wou'd repeat his Rebuke to Magus, thy Money perish with thee, &c. The evil Influence of this Cluster of Errors is manifold; hence come the Voluptuoulnels of Priests, and the Impoverishment of Countries to adorn their Palaces and pamper them in Laziness and Gluttony: Hence enslaved Consciences, and blinded Minds, with the close Imprisonment, or indeed Death and Burial of the Bible: Gain being the Temptation to the Guides, who have feared themselves by their cruel Craft and Fallacies: A Judicial Credulity befaling them for their Fleshliness, of which they V 3 wou'd

wou'd not take the plain Warning of God !! Hence also many other gross Practices of the Roman Church, as the scandalous Sale of Pardons. and profuse scattering of Indulgences, so as to make the Church not only a ' House of Merchandize, but a Den of Thieves: For there is no fuch Bank again in the whole World; which is inexhaustible as Imagination it self, and deep as the Wickedness that is in Man; nor is there such bare-fac'd Robbery of the Living and Dead both, hallowed by being committed in the Church. So on a Mountebank's Stage Things of pretended unknown Vertues are vended with many Lies and Fooleries; but 'tis less pardonable to cheat credulous People of their Souls than of their Money. Finally, Hence comes the worshiping of Saints and their Relicks, for who wou'd not pray to them if they have Grace to impart, and who wou'd not kifs their Garment that believ'd Vertue to be in it, as from the Hem of our Saviour's once, to heal Body or Soul? Hence also Prayers for the Dead; for what charitable Man cou'd refuse it, who is fixt in the Opinion that Prayer can yet reach and benefit 'em, or that God has given him fo much Grace that he may fend Part of it before him into the other World. to relieve a poor Heart frying in Purgatory? He that wou'd run to quench his Neighbour's House, or to fnatch him or his Goods from the Flames, won'd certainly do as much or more for his Soul, to fave that from Everlasting Burnings. Langels and Champhy:

There is indeed some seeming Good that has come of this silly and scandalous Doctrine of Super-erogation, soil. A retired and mortifyed Life of some sew, spent in divine Contemplati-

^{| 2} Thef. 2. 9, 10, 11, 12.

ons and raised Devotions: Supposing which, yet how many Thousands have profanely abused that Pretence, the Secrets of their Cloisters being as filthy as the Mysteries of Heathenism; and at the best, Religion does not lie in such a Sequestring our selves from the World, but more Glory is brought to God, more Service done to Mankind, and our Souls advance more in Holiness by an extensive Usefulness and open Converse; being in the Way to be used by Providence, and made Instrumental to the Conversion and Edification of

many.

But there is one real good Effect of these abfurd Doctrines of Antichrift, accidental to the Defign and Defire of those that vend 'em, which is (as the Excellent Dr. Burnet observes ||) that the Grossness of them greatly promoted the Reformation, by provoking Peoples Inignation, giving Scandal even to an ignorant Age and the ruder fort of People. So God brings Good out of Evil, and makes the Iniquity and Folly of Men confound their own Projects: The Devil often has overshot and spoilt his own Work: Excess of insolent Error prepar'd and spirited the World to eject and spue it out. Gain canoniz'd these Errors, and Riches, got by 'em for a while, supported 'em, and made their Church gaudy and potent; but Greediness has long since begun its

Us E. The Use is, 1. To explode the Doctrine of Merit, and all the Assertors of it, as great Ignorance, or great Knavery in them. I shall not treat of the Nature and requisite Conditions of a meritorious Action, which have a thousand times over been noted by our Divines against the

His Exposition of the Arricles of the Church of England, Art. 14. P. 137.

Papilts t, and proved not to be found in any meer Man fince the Fall. The Word has a daring Sound, as Dr. Burnet observes, and little becomes a Creature to use toward a Being of Infinite Majesty, and with Relation to endless Rewards. There is fomething in the Nature of Man apt to swell out of Measure, to which no Indulgence must be given, nor any such Words come into Use that may flatter it. Nor that wou'd jar with many grand Points of Christian Practice, Humility, Penitence, Confession, and Prayer it felf. For, what has he to forrow for who is Perfect? And what to be abased for, who has Works of Super-erogation to glory in? Or what shou'd he ask, who needs nothing, who has more than enough? When he confesses Sin he lies, and when he prays he compliments. ' He acts not the Suppliant but the Merchant,

comes not to be reliev'd but to traffick, and insolently pretends to buy the very Thing he impotently begs. It moves a noble Disdain

to see the ridiculous Pride of Men, and Zeal for the free Grace of God, wherein his Honour is fo much concern'd, will justify the severest Re-

flections on this bold Error.

Let it beget in us a Scorn and Deteftation both of Popery and Pelagianism, and make us very thankful to God for our distance from both, The Beaft wou'd not stand a Day without this rotten Prop: There wou'd be no fufficient Revenues to maintain her Pomp, ber Magnificence wou'd be destroy'd, which Gain preserves, as the Silver Shrines did the Goddess Diana's, whom Demetrius was fo zealous for and inflam'd the rest by this very Reason, Sirs, ye know that by this Craft we

^{. †} See Turretine, Morning Exercises against Popery, Dr. South's Sarmons. Vol. 3d. Sermi Ift. St Dam to ja chis if.

bave our Wealth. We are bound to give Thanks always to God for our selves, — that he hath from the beginning chosen us to the Belief of the Truth, whereunto he has called us by the Gospel: In which let us stand fast, and despise the Fiction of being Good by a Deputy, as a great Person speaks, for so you may 'go to Heaven by Proxy, but to 'Hell in Person.

And yet it is true that God puts unimaginable Honour on the Obedience of his fincere Servants. This is Thank-worthy (fays the Holy Ghoff !!) If a Man for Conscience sake toward God endure Grief. O aftonishing Word! That the Great God shou'd bespeak us as one obliged by us, (beholden to us, fays one)! Which an ingenious Servant on Earth wou'd blush to hear from his Master (tho', before God, his Fellow-servant too) when he had done his best and pleas'd him *! Wou'd he go away and fay - I deferved Thanks? Or wou'd he challenge it? No more - shou'd we carry it infolently under the Condescention of God, but the rather Adore before him for it. Yet there is another Text + that goes further than this, and One well calls it an Amazing Scripture, - Bleffed are those Servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: Verily I say unto you, that be (hall gird himself, and make them to sit down to Meat, and will come forth and serve 'em. Had we never so much Merit, and a Face to insist on it, yet this were enough to stun us. A strange Respect which every modest Heart flies back from the Offer of, as Peter did when the Lord came toward him to wash bis Feet (a) Lord, said he, thou shalt never do it. It affrighted him to see his Lord doing the meanest Office of a Servant, having taken the Form of one. As unusual and unexpect-

^{| 1} Pet. 2. 19. * Luk. 17. 9. † 12. 37. (*) John 13. 6, 8.

ed Honours will the Lord do his Redeemed, as this wou'd be from a Master to his Servants among Men; but certainly this only infers his superlative Condescention, not his Servants Deserts.

2. Nevertheless let us affert the Necessity, and vindicate the Honour of Inherent Holiness, and Good Works, though we do not build on, nor rest in them. Far be it from us to be indifferent about Holy Living, as the Patrons of Merit wou'd flander us. The Protestant Faith and Do-Arine puts the highest Honour on Holiness. We were always taught to follow after Holinefs, as that without which we can never fee God, and to exercise our felves unto all the Duties of Piety, Charity and Purity, as much as if we were to merit Heaven by our Doings , but after all to look upon our selves as unprofitable and vile, and rely on God's meer Mercy and Truth, in and through the alone Worthiness of his beloved Son. But we detest the Thought of expecting to be faved without fincere Repentance and Obedience; we look for no Interest in Christ, nor Salvation by him, without a new Heart and Life. We do not deceive our selves in a false Notion of a State of Grace: He that doeth Righteousness is Righteous, even as He is Righteeus. God forbid we shou'd ever feem to fay, Let us continue in Sin that Grace may abound. We believe there are indispensable Conditions or Qualifications requifite by the Tenour of the Gospel, and that the Death of Christ, will be far from profiting us if we be found deftitute of these; that it is not enough to cast our felves on Free Grace living lawlessly, or prefumptuously, confiding that Christ dyed for us in particular. We must go on plain and sufficient Grounds in forming to our selves such a Perswasion, purifying our selves as be is pure, ere we entertain

entertain such a Hope; not looking on our selves in him unless we are New Creatures, and have some comfortable Evidence of our Regeneration. We must get Conformity to his Holiness, as ever we wou'd perswade our selves of Union to him as our Head, or of partaking in his Honour and Glory: As it is written, Be ye Holy for I

am Holy.

We believe a Gospel-Law, and that it is strictly Holy and binding, and we must be Doers of it; that the allow'd Transgression of it is damning; that no secret Hypocrite, or profane Despiser, or partial Observer of it can be saved. But this we fay, that there may be Uprightness and true Holiness with remaining Imperfection and Sin, and the most holy Person will always have it to bewail himself under; that he cannot be justified but in the Perfect Righteousness of Christ, that this avails to his Justification notwithstanding the Imperfection of his own Obedience; that nevertheless this his hearty Obedience, however defective, doth flow from a new Nature given him, a real Principle of Holiness wrought in him by the Spirit of God, whereby the Man is made truly a holy Person, after the Image of the Holy God; and cannot but live holily after the bleffed Will and Commandment of God, yet in so poor a Manner, that it is the Riches of Free Grace, that ever he shou'd be accepted after all; nevertheless as fure to find Acceptance through Christ, as if he were most compleatly Righteous as Adam before he fell.

Thus we preserve to God the Honour of his Free and Rich Mercy, to the Lord Jesus Christ the Glory of his Righteousness, to the Holy Ghost the Honour of his Operation and Efficiency, to Holiness its Majesty and Empire,

and to the Saints the Glory that God puts on them.

To Conclude, You are called to Glory and Vertue, to Glory as your End, and to Holiness as the Way thither. And now, Holy Bretbren, pertakers of the heavenly Calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our Profession, Christ Jesus: Look to him for Righteousness, yield to his Conduct and Influence, Submit to his Soveraign Authority, imitate his Glorious Example, depend on him for Strength and Ability; ascribe all the Grace you receive, and all the Good you at any time do, and all the Salvation you ever hope for to his Merit and Efficiency; and when you get the Crown, you will cast it and your self at his Feet, in whose Strength you overcome, and through whose Righteousness you receive the Reward of the Eternal Inheritance. Charle, that this availe to the unitedication not

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MATTH. xxv. part of the 9 & 10 Ver.

But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves. And while they went to buy the Bridegroom came—

T is difficult what Name to give, and what Sense to put on these Words. Whether they be a Piece of serious Advice, or a Scoff in Difdain of their absurd and profane Request, or barely a Fiction of the Parable, whereunto no Spiritual Sense is to be apply'd, nor any Divine Doarine design'd to be built on. Dr. Burnet thinks the last, and fays*, 'They are only a Piece of the Fiction of the Parable, which cannot come into any Part of the Application of it. So that I should have the Countenance of a most Learned Person, should I so dismis 'em. Others of Great Name make 'em an Irony or Sarcasm t, i. e. spoken in way of Scoff and Derifion, as Solomon advises, to answer a Fool according to bis Folly (a). There is a great deal of Sharpness and Severity in such a mode of Speech, a mocking Trope, which feems indeed to comply with a Folly, while it slily stings one for it: When wifely used, it is a very excellent way to rebuke and convince, and therefore frequently used in Scripture (b). A rich Market truly wou'd it be, and a glorious Place, where this Heavenly Ware were fold; the very Suburbs and Gate of Heaven: Yet One there is famous for this

Exprof. of the 39 Art. p. 136. † Non est Admonitio, sed Exprobratio, Calv. Non quod oleum esset venale, sed ut Stultitiam exprobrent, Pareus. And so Archbishop Tillotson, &c. (a) Pro. 26. 5. (b) 1 Kings 22. 15. Eccles. 11. 9. Mat. 26. 45.

Pretence, where open Fairs are kept for Spiritual Traffick, and where only the Petition of the Foolish is like to meet with a grave and favourable Answer. The Wife disclaim any such Mart of their fetting up, or frequenting, or any fuch a Trade driven in their Churches, -Go ye rather to them that fell-, to the Magnificent, and Rich, and Proud, that fay, They have the Commodity to fell, They are the Men, and Wildom shall die with 'em, They are the Stewards of God's Treasury! We poor Believers, that have not a clean Rag to be call'd our own, can have nothing to give or lend; For do any ever go to the Poor for Alms?

There are some Things so absurd, that it is mean and idle to spend Time and Breath to shew them to be fo. A Wife Man will disdain to answer fome notorious Impertinencies. Silence and a Smile is the best Return to 'em. As the Philosopher rose up in Disdain, and walk'd cross the Room, when One was arguing against Local Motion: He wou'd not open his Lips to answer fuch an Arguist. So in Religion there are some Opinions taken up, fo filly, shameless, and cross to common Sense, that a laborious Refutation of 'em does 'em too much Honour, if the Obstinacy and Perverseness of Erring People in defending 'em, and Charity to their Souls, did not make it necessary. Such is the extravagant Desire of the Foolish here, as if a Man shou'd expect to be nourish'd by the Food that another eats, 'or to be heal'd by the Physick another takes, or a Felon should plead for Mercy, because there are Others that have liv'd soberly and honestly. Truly the Foolish merit a Reply full of Scorn, --- Aye, go by all means and buy,only come not to Us: Credit them that pretend to fells twill be a good Purchase, --- no doubt but you are like

like to succeed well in your Enterprize! A good Voyage to Rome, and may you come there at the Jubilee, when there are Plenty of Pardons as Dirt in the Streets, and Booths full of Relicks, which, rather than

return naked, you may cloath you withal!

But there are Divines of Reverend Name, that cannot agree to this Sense put on the Words; but rather think that the Wise Virgins must needs be understood to speak seriously, and give their sober and judicious Advice, full of Compassion to the perishing Souls of the Foolish. Mr. Shepherd || in particular, has a deep Resentment of, and Indignation at, the foregoing Interpretation. His Reasons are especially these Two, which, with great Deference, I will presume just to name and

reply to.

The First is, Because the Foolish are called Virgins, whence he argues, they had escaped the Pollutions of Antichrist. But, I think, this Reason is founded on a narrow Principle and obvious Mistake; as if, by the Ten Virgins in this Parable, were only meant the Purer and Reformed Churches: Nor have I met with one Expositor who understands it of Particular Congregations, or Purer Churches, as that Reverend Person seems to carry the Sense throughout his long Labours on this Parable. By Virgins we are to understand the whole World of Profes'd Christians, and the corrupt Part of them under Antichrift, as well as those that have escap'd his Abominations. For as we dare not fay of any Denomination of Christians, that there is not one wife, pious, and fincere Soul among them; fo we must confess that there are many of the foolish, erroneous, hypocritical and profane among our felves. And why may we not number among the Foolish,

I See his Treatife on this Parable.

those that are infected with Popish Principles, as well as Self-justifying Pharifees among our Selves, and poor Wretches too that build too much on the Eucharist, and the Prayers of Others for them. when they are like to die. In short, Wherever there is a Profession of Christianity, there are Virgins, with Lamps, going forth to meet the Bridegroom; and it is a great Favour to Popery, if we will not allow the Foolish to be found there as well as elsewhere: And if the Name Virgin may agree to every Impure Soul among Protestants, why not to Impure Papifts? for there are Moral Abominations among Us that pollute the Soul, as well as Doctrinal and Disciplinary ones among Them; and there is the same Reason why filthy Protestants shou'd not be honour'd with the Name of Virgins, as why the spurious Offspring of the Mother of Harlots shou'd not.

His other Reason is to this Purpose, That it were unfit for the Wife fo to deride the Foolish, a barbarous and inhumane Carriage toward an Object of Pity, 'which can't confift with a gracious and compassionate Spirit. And, indeed, there is a Tenderness due 'to wounded Confciences and Spirits, broken under a Sense of Sin. But this is not the Case of these in the Text: The Foolish Virgins are not to be look'd on here as barely convinc'd and awaken'd Sinners, but as incorrigible, till startled now by the Advance of Death and Judgment, which there is no Wretch fo wicked but may be. And in fuch a Case, the Folly of their Plea may well raise a Holy Soul's Disdain and high Indignation, the Honour of God and his Grace being ftruck at in it. Pareus therefore well says, Non Injuria remittuntur, qui ita sunt fatui, it is no Injury to Sinners so wilfully beforted, to be so disdainfully remitted to their Idoliz'd Follies: The scri-

pture

pture makes it confiftent with the Goodness and Compassion of God himself +, how much more may it with the Spirit of Grace and Mercifulness in his Servants. And moreover, The same Pity and Tenderness is not always alike due to the same Object of Misery. We ought to weep over those Sinners now, whom we may One Day come to clap Hands at, and look on their Destruction without Concern, nay, with Souls rejoycing to fee God Glorify'd in his Triumphing Justice. The Time will come when Pity, in those Expressions of it, which are decent and a Duty now, will be no more either, and, it may be, neither lawful nor possible to Happy Souls; who will, in all the Motions of their Spirits and Affections, be according to the most Perfect Nature and Holy Pleasure of God; and whom he rejects as his Enemies, or whose Cries he laughs at, neither will they grieve for. No dear Relation, no Perfonal Obligations, no Intimacy and contracted Friendship will hinder this in That Day, when God shall be All to his Saints, and they shall know neither Father, nor Mother, nor Child, nor Brother, but who are found the Friends of Christ, the Bridegroom; and they shall be all this—Our Mother, and Sister, and Brother, while those whom we have known only in the Flesh, how dear soever now, shall be nothing at all to us. This is a hard Meditation to Flesh and Blood, but even already very reasonable and undoubted, and pleasing to Faith.

These Reasons therefore do not persuade me against the Sense given of the Text. That which wou'd rather weigh with me is, That the Foolish seem to take it as a piece of Serious Advice, and

[†] Deut. 32. 38. Jer. 2. 38. Prov. 1. 26, 27.

accordingly follow it; which wou'd they if it were given only in Derision? But I consider again, that there is nothing incongruous in this Representation of the Matter, partly because Sarcastical Speeches are not always apprehended, partly because we actually find many such Fools in the World, who, against all the Remonstrances of Reason and Scripture have built on the Merits of Saints when they come to die; and, finally, it must be attributed to their distracting Anguishes, which, in Amaze, would take any Course, were it possible, wilder than this, if slatter'd

with the least Hope of Success.

But what puts it beyond all doubt, that it can't be a grave Direction or ferious Counsel is, That there really is not any fuch thing as felling or buying Grace. Nor is it enough to fay, That buying is here meant in an improper Sense, as in many other Places of Scripture ||, to mean only going to God in the Use of Means, and, in his appointed Way, begging of him, and trufting in him, to give us of his Spirit. is buying very often in the Sense of Scripture: but in this Sense the Foolish Virgins seem not at all to be seeking after Oil: They seek to the Wise for some of theirs, not of God for to receive from Him, in the Ways wherein He is wont to dispense it; but whereas there are some in the World who pretend to fell, and the Foolish are looking after some such, the Wife refer em to these Pretenders, answering them according to their Folly; to go to them, fince they are for getting Grace of Creatures.

Moreover, The Time for Ordinances, and the Use of Common Means, was now past with them. The Bridegroom is on his Way, Death

Prov. 23. 23. Ifa. 55. 1. Matth. 13. 4, 5. Rev. 3. 18.

has done his Errand, the Judgment is come; and is this a Time to tell Lost Sinners gravely, 'You must go to the Dispensers of the Word and Ordinances, whose Ministry God makes use of for the conferring of Grace? † These are those that have to sell, i. e. by whose Labours God ordinarily imparts Grace to Men. 'This is the Custom of Saints, to send Others to those Means and Ways which God has blest to Them. Which tho' it be a serious and holy Truth in it self, yet not the Sense of the Text; the wretched Sinners here being past all this, they were never to have a Sabbath, or hear a Sermon more, their last Breath was going out,

and their Day of Mercy past.

But if a serious and compassionate Sense must be fixed on the Words, as indeed I had rather if I can do it pertinently, it must be this,the Facility are directed to look up to Heaven for themselves, and make their last Effort with their whole Might: Not to fink in Despair, and give themselves over for lost, without trying what may be done even with the last poor Breath: Not to give over all Hope and Endeavour whilst there's any Life remaining to call on God, or the least Understanding for it: To cry at least for Mercy, tho' there's Time for no more. Not meaning to encourage Any to put this Work off to the last, and depend on finding Mercy then, if we have but Time and Reason left to ask it; but that, if Any are so desperately foolish, so profanely wicked, so unhappy and wretched, yet even then to struggle for the Life of their Souls, and make one mighty Effort at last. So that if it shou'd be our forlorn and woful Case; to be surpriz'd with a dying Hour wholly un-

t Clerk's Annes, in loc. Shepherd on this Parable.

provided, which God in Mercy forbid, yet even then the best Advice that can be given us is, To do what we can for the Life of our Soul, crying to God, in the Name of Christ, for his free Pardon, and for his Spirit to change our Hearts, if it might be possible, in our last Moments.

It must needs be seemly for a poor Soul to ftrive to the last, tho' Conscience may condemn. tho' Satan hurry, and alas, the Word of God it felf give little Hope, if any; yet to pray and wrestle, and beg and scrabble after Mercy. Not that Any one should build on the Groans and Tears of his last Anguishes; but neither should Men despond and give over all Endeavour. So far the Foolish Virgins are in the right, tho' they find their Lamps gone out, yet to bestir themselves for Oil, if it might be got; their remaining Breath is best spent in quest of it. For who knows what God may enable a poor Soul to do, and how He may visit him in his last Hour? While we have but one Breath more, and Reason with it, we have something to do, and what better—than to call upon God with it?"Tis the best and only Thing to be done in the Case supposed: The Soul can but perish after all, and is fure of it without attempting: If its Cries don't avail, they can't hurt; for Despair is always a Sin on this side of Hell, because we are not let into the Secrets and Everlasting Counsels and Purposes of God. Despair is contemptuous of God, as well as the Creature's last Misery: It is audaciously to limit him, whose Power and whose Grace we cannot understand; and it is to cut the Sinews of Enterprize, and make that unavoidable which we fear.

Pray, confider Jonah's Behaviour in the Fishes Belly: Was not his Cafe desperate? Swallow'd

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by the Sea first, and then by a Fish, as it might look to make the surer of him! Already devour'd and entomb'd, drown'd and eaten too, as Carcases use to be! And all this for his Sin, and in the very Act of his Disobedience, Rebellion, and Insidelity! Yet did he not cry out of the very Belly of Hell? And when his Heart smote him—I am cast out of his Sight, yet did he not look again toward the God he had sled from? When my Soul sainted within me, I remembred the Lord. And who, that remembers Him, his Power and Goodness, can faint? For who knows the Extent of either, or how they will work? What Jonah did for a Temporal Life, shall not we do for an Eternal one?

The wretched Thief on the Cross, turn'd his Eyes to the Saviour. Since there is a Saviour, who wou'd not raise his Heart to him as he dies, tho' he had never before? Not that One of a Million may succeed as the happy Thief did; and yet (O desperate Hazard!) who knows but that One of a Million may be You! Which alone poor Possibility should open thy Lips, and raise thy Heart to pray.

And yet, God grant we may never come to practife the Rule that has been now press'd. But if it ever be the sad Case of any present, (as it infallibly will be of Every one that puts off his Repentance till the Pangs of Death comes on) I pray God mercifully to call to your Minds what you have now been hearing, that you may expire striving for your Souls, tho' the gastly Sorrows of Death surround, and the Pains of Hell take bold on you.

A Man that has but one Breath to take, had need use it well; but it is Madness in him, if he has spent all the rest in panting after Sin, and has only that one Gasp for his Soul.

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If a Man truly repents, and his Soul embraces the Lord Jesus Christ, tho' it be his last Hour or Minute, he shall be faved, as the Thief was. But that you will be able to do either then, if you will not now, I dare not in the least encourage you to think. Yet if I were by thee on thy Death-bed then, I wou'd invite and urge you hereunto, and look up to Christ for and with you, to enable and accept you; and this is all I cou'd do, or you for your felf; and fo taking leave of you, as Charity wou'd forbid me to judge your State after Death, so the Scripture wou'd not allow me to hope much neither.

You fee what you have to do living or dying; One only Remedy and Refuge before you, One only Work to do, and while Life lasts, and you have Means to use for the getting of Oil, lay in Store against the Time to come, that you may lay hold of Eternal Life. For beforted is he, who remits it to the unknown Agonies and uncertain Minutes of a Death-bed: the most deplorable Condition next to the being actually in Hell; 'next to e leaping head-long into it without any Repentance at all: Doubtless, the most desperate Folly is—to have it to do as we are a

dying.

It is high time to pass on to the Account of the Success the Foolish found in following the Advice given: And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came. It feems then they did go, and made Attempts, in their last Extremity, to get Oil, and that with more Earnestness than ever before: In this they did well, only it feems that they retain'd their Folly to the last, and perish'd in it. They went to buy, but whether they found Any that pretended to fell, and fo came to think themselves at last supply'd, the Parable

parable is filent. Let us, if you will, rather think these miserable Virgins better employ'd, and crying with inexpressible Anguish and Ardency for Mercy: And then let us attend to the Success of these their last Efforts and Endeavours. Tis all to no Effect, for as they were going

the Bridegroom came.

It is Calvin's Note on the Place, 'That it is 'not fo much our Business to enquire scrupu- lously how the silly Souls went to buy, as 'to note how they succeeded; the Scope of the Passage being to let us know, That, after their utmost Striving, they did nothing to any purpose; and so to teach us the 'Invalidity, gene- rally speaking, of a Death-bed Repentance, 'tis too late to begin that Work as the Bride- groom is coming.

And, indeed, the Parable it self seems designedly fram'd for this very Thing, 'to discountenance' a Death-bed Repentance. Sincere Conversion is seldom at all, when the Concern of Men for their Souls begins so late. Let the Dostrine then be,

That the Great Work of Repentance and Conversion is seldom done at all, when it is delay'd and lest to the last Hours and Efforts of Life. Or, That it is extreamly hazardous and unlikely to be done, if lest to the last Extremity, and a Dying Hour.

One Thing is here suppos'd, and another affirm'd. It is suppos'd to be a too frequent Thing for Men to leave or delay their Repentance to a Sick-Bed, and the last Extremities: And then it is affirm'd to be extreamly hazardous, whe-

ther they will ever repent at all.

I. It is too frequent a thing for Men to leave the Great Work of Repentance to the last Extremities, flattering themselves that they shall X 4 and and will do it hereafter, at least, on a Sick-Bed, and ere they die. Were not this the common, gross, and palpable Custom of Men, I shou'd not be willing to intimate the Being of any such Thing at all: It being a Folly and Iniquity I wou'd rather industriously cover, for the Credit and Safety of Mankind; for Fear, especially, of the evil Insluence of such an Example, if there were but One, or a few Single ones, in the World: But, alas! it is almost every Man's Sin and Misery, which all feel too much of, and

most do cherish.

Let Conscience say, if it is not a Proneness in the Nature of finful Man, to put off Convictions from Day to Day, promising hereafter to give them a Confideration. We find this unreasonable, unaccountable Disposition natural to Us: To pacify Conscience, Men promise to give it Satisfaction, as a Thief speaks fair, and throws a Crumb to the fnarling Mastiff, till he corrupt the faithful Keeper to fawn on him. Not only does a Felix fo lay his Fears, but all the Foolish ones take the same Course: A more convenient Season is their Cry, but never does it come. Moreover, The Scripture therefore frequently exhorts unto instant Obedience, warning Us against procrastinating: || Return ye now every Man from his evil way: to Day if ye will hear his Voice -: Give Glory to the Lord your God before be cause Darkness, and bring on the Shadow of Death: Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near, &c. What mean these vehement Injunctions, but that we are apt to put off the Confideration of our Spiritual and Eternal Concerns?

recombelves than

[|] Jer. 35. 15. Heb. 3. 15. Jer. 13. 16. Ifa. 55. 6.

But whence comes it that Men act thus?

What's the Cause or Reason?

1. Is it that some may have repented in their last Hours, and truly turn'd to God? Can you produce any more than one certain Instance of this in Scripture? scil. the Thief on the Cross: And will this Instance afford you any Countenance, when you come to a Death-Bed, to lie repenting there? It was in a Time of Miracles, and He that liv'd working them, dy'd fo too. Will you also look for a miraculous Cure when you are fick, because Christ healed so many in miraculous Manner once? Why then should you encourage, or rather harden, your felves against a Dying Hour, by a single Instance of miraculous Grace? Are you fure that he 'repented only on the Cross, and that it was the Effect of a sudden Inspiration at that In-' flant? Is your Case at all like that poor Wretch's, who confess'd our Saviour (you fuppose) as foon as he knew him? Are you like to have the External Means of Conversion he had, scil. he beheld his Savjour dying by his Side, the God appearing in all he spake and did? Well might his long harden'd Soul be pierc'd thro' at the Sight, and the Conviction come with double Power, entring by his very Senfes. Or, Think you it will found alike in the Ears of Heaven, if on your Death-Bed You repeat the Words and Action of that happy Thief? For, Is it so much for you to lift up an Eye to a Glorify'd Saviour, and cry, Lord, receive me! as it was for him to turn unto Jesus on his Cross, amidst the Insults of his Enemies, in the darkest part of his Humiliation, and own his Godhead under those Clouds? 'It is too extraordinary in all its Circumstances, to be any Encouragement to Us to build on a late Repentance. Or

were the Case not so, yet the Grace of God is Soveraign and Arbitrary; be bath Mercy on whom be will have Mercy, but has no where intimated that such shall receive any Grace, who do but gasp for it when they come to do so for Breath.

2. It may be some delay their Repentance on the wicked Imagination, that it is an easie Thing, and in their Power to do it when they will. There are very groß Notions that many take up about their own Liberty and Free-will, proceeding from a natural Pride in Man, who wou'd be sufficient for himself. This haughty Conceit tempts him to delay his turning to God; for he fays to himself, I can do it hereafter and intend it: And so having no Doubt of his Ability and Power over himself to do it effectually when he pleases, he the more quietly and confidently spares himself now. For what I can do when I will, if I have no lift to do to Day, I shall infallibly put off till to Morrow. But no Temptation is more gross than this, more cross to Scripture and Man's own Experience; and be that trusteth in his own Heart thus far is a Fool indeed.

3. Is it not really because Men can't find a Heart to turn from Sin, nor reconcile themselves to the Ways of Holiness, that they put themselves off with Promises of bereafter. They hold sast Deceit, hating to be reformed. They sight, for their favour'd Sins, which have nested so long in their Bosoms. They go after their Lovers, whose Chains they wear and are dragg'd on by: These plead for their Life, and for their sakes the Fears of Hell are husht, and the Desires of Heaven dampt. These address to the Flesh while God does to the Mind, and strike the Senses while the Word does the Spirit. When it comes to parting the sensealed Heart dies

away; the Flesh slinches - No, not this right Eve! A tender Part to pluck out! Spare it at leaft to Day! And to Morrow the Luft is more endear'd, and our Fears and Aversion the same. So many a timerous Heart has fent back the Surgeon, their Hearts failing them at the Sight of his Instruments.

4. Many, it may be feared, delay their Repentance from fond Notions of Goodness and Mercy in God. Men flatter themselves till their Iniquity be found bateful: Hateful to that God whom they hope to find so easie; but will be found Holy in his Nature and true to his Threatnings. However greedily Men fwallow falfe Notions of God, he is that he is, and fo they'll find; and that he is dishonoured by, and highly provok'd at the mean Image drawn of him. This Presumption on the divine Goodness affronts and denies his Holiness and Truth, which claim their Glory in the Sinner's Sufferings, when the Season of Mercy ends. The filly Virgins may prefume what they will of having to do with one of infinite Compassion and Grace; but they find him inexorably Severe and Righteous at laft.

s. And lastly, Some may encourage themselves in their Delays, because they have known others do fo, and yet in all appearance die well enough; with as much Quiet and fometimes with more than others that have been well accounted of. This is to judge of spiritual Things by Sense, for which the Psalmist taxes himself with Ignorance and Brutishness, I was even as a Beast, fays he, to be moved by this - that there are no Bands in their Death. There is a fam'd Calm of the Dead Sea, which is its Curse: What's more quiet and still than a Carcass? O fatal Quiet, that shows a stupid, sensless Creature; void of any spiritual Life! And is the dire Judgment of God! And there's a deluding Hope that is altogether as bad, when Men comfort themselves in Death from a natural Hardiness, or a fond arrogant Considence. None of these forenamed Reasons are really any, why Men should delay to care for their Souls; but yet Multitudes there are who absurdly and profanely do so, having none better to give for their Conduct.

II. This great Work is feldom, if ever, done at all when it is put off to the last Extremity; or at least it is an infinite Hazard, maugre all our confident Purposes and Promises. We have no Assurance of the Will to repent at last, and much less of the Power, and that if we do seek it carefully with Tears, we shall find any Place or

poffibility of it.

How often are all the Tears and Prayers and Vows of a Death-bed found to be Wind and Hypocrifie. As Mens Fears go off, or the old Temptations do return with Health, fo they lose their devout Frames, and relapse into old Courses. How often have Men deceived themselves, and liv'd to be convinc'd of it. Nor is it at all strange, for 1. There are many natural Impediments in the Case supposed, and 2. There's no Reason to look for extraordinary Assistances from God, but much the contrary.

I. On a Sick bed, or at the Advance of Death it is least of all possible to repent, there being many Things now concurring to disable more

than ever before ||. As,

r. The past Habit of Sin is now arrived at its last length, and may be supposed to have strongly fixt the love of it, and increased the Strength of Corruption. Custom in Sin sets Men insensibly

^{||} Dr. Barrow, Vol. 3d. Serm. 16, 17.

into Inveterateness against God and Holiness, and increases the Native Feebleness to Good. He that dies old in the Practice has added to the first Inclination to Evil, and a double Violence must be used to correct it, when at the same Time a double Unwillingness and Disability is contracted, either to do or to bear it. Repentance is less practicable and less sufferable than it wou'd have been heretofore.

2. The Fright and Terror does usually fadly disorder the Soul. Excess of Fear is common at the Prospect of a wosul Eternity, and it unsits and discomposes the Mind for any due Preparation: It stuns and amazes, and so nothing is

done at all, or wildly and giddily.

3. Bodily Pains and Languishings alone, without those that are the Souls own, wou'd hinder the Work in hand. What Life or Spirit is there to do any thing amidst sick Qualms and faint Fits? They divert from any fixt Attention; they are a continual Avocation: The distressed Body will even then also thrust the more miserable Soul out of Mind, as it does now in Health through Wantonness; and while the Soul wou'd cry out of its Sins, it is diverted and forc'd to do so of the Body's Pains.

Moreover, when Sickness comes it may break our Reason, as is common in Fevers; it may stupisse or make light and trissing; and then what's become of the Man's Promises and Dependance on a sober and serious Interval to repent in? The poor Soul goes at last without one Thought bestowed upon it! Depriv'd wholly of Power to restect on past Guilts and present Danger. Or if Reason remains there may be neither leisure nor Power to use it, the Thoughts may be broken every Minute, and it is more than enough to rally them again as fast as they

fcatter and are put to rout. 'How know we how our Memories may fail us? Or how flow and dully our Thoughts may move? What lame and tedious Work we shall make in calling

our selves to an Account? Oc.

4. Nor is there any Time left for a deliberate Thought and Act; to fit down and think over Matters calmly. What is done for the Soul is done in Hast, in the Hurry and Tumult of the Passions, in one poor Instance, as it were. The Work is too Vast for the Time, though not indeed for God to do it in. Our whole Life is little enough to do it well in, and now it must be hastily dispatcht in a Day or an Hour. Those Iron Fetters, which a long Custom of Sin has lock'd fast on, must be snap'd asunder in a Moment, as a thread of Tow half burnt: Whereas were Life prolonged, and Grace given, it wou'd be the Work of much Time to loosen and shake 'em off.

s. And laftly, Worldly Affairs also will encumber on a Death-bed, and call for more of our lost Moments than the Concerns of our Souls will allow us to spare. 'Tis enough to have our Honses to set in Order, and not our Souls too. And when a Man's worldly Affairs are fettled by his last Will, he has then the hard Work to do of taking leave of his Family and Relatives, to bear their Tears and his Fears for them, had he none for himself: But the Pain of both together is distracting, to think how he leaves them, and whither he goes himself; what may befall them, and what worse himself in an unknown State. Now also his past Carriage, in the several Relations he has sustain'd, comes to Mind, and he has Acknowledgements to make to all about him, and their Forgiveness to ask together with their Prayers. Every weeping Face about him will help

help to disorder him, and give him some Concern for them amidst so much for himself, diverting him it may be to still them, while he needs so much to be quieted and supported himself. Much there is in this World dear to him, and it grieves him to leave it, and much he fears as to another World, and he trembles to go to meet it. And in this manifold Care and Disquiet he has the grand Concerns of his Immortal Soul to consider; the great Work of Religion both to begin and to finish.

So much is there to disable and hinder us, if we put off our Repentance till Death advances.

II. There's no Reason to expect extraordinary Grace and Assistance from God, but much the contrary †. For,

r. He is greatly provoked totally to withdraw and leave us, having been so long resisted already. When a Man has been obstinately deaf to the Word and Spirit of the blessed God all his Life long, shall he think that now at last God must needs open his Heart and hear him? Must he needs yet strive after the utmost Mockery and Scorn of his Patience? Must he wait for ever, till our proud Stomachs come down, and be at our Beck when at last they do? Does it ill beseem the Majesty of God to resent and abandon after such ill Usage?

The Holy Ghost needs not a Temple or Dwelling that he asks thy Heart; he is not Indigent, not having where to lay his Head: He possesses Myriads of Glorious Spirits, with whom thou art not to be named. The Saviour has his Servants and Members, though thou art neither, his House will be full, thy Absence will make no Vacancy. The Blessedness of Christ is not impaired by thy being his Enemy; Heaven will not

† See Dr. Scor's Serm. Vol. 1. p. 207, Oc.

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miss thee if thou perishest, nor the Saints lack thy Company.

Or has the ever Bleffed God engaged himfelf by Promise to wait on thee to the last? Has he not awfully intimated | much the contrary?

2. Is it not just with God to deny Men that Grace which they have fo boldly and unwarrantably prefum'd on all along? Depending as confidently on repenting when Death comes, as if they cou'd challenge Grace at God's Hand. The Goodness of God may be affronted by Men. There is a Trust in it (so call'd) that is arrogant and impudent, in Contempt of his Word, which gives no ground for it, and an Injury to his Nature which is dishonoured by any such mean Idea or Notion taken up of him. A scandalous Abuse of Divine Goodness, to presume on it to the hardning our felves in Sin. What do we make of Goodness at the same Time? Simplicity, Easiness, Insensibleness, Weakness? A tame Nature that can't refent a Wrong, or be Angry? Does the great God give us leave to think after this Manner of him? Whose Name is Fealous *! Men wou'd abuse the mild Appearance of the Dove (a), and the Name of the Lamb (b): At the fame time making Sin to feem a light Evil, and the Holiness of God a light Aversion to it. All this is highly to the Dishonour of God. and provoking of his Wrath.

3. So also is the presuming on our own Strength, and trusting in our Purposes and Resolutions that we will repent. It shows a great Confidence we have in our selves, which Vanity and Pride alone is enough to cause God to forsake us, and to say — Come on, let us see

^{| 1.} Thess. 5. 19. Isa. 63. 10. Heb. 3. 12. * Exod. 34. 14. (a) Mat. 3. 16. (b) Rev. 14. 1.

what this conceited Man will do, whether he'll make good all his Boafts and Promises, and be to himselfinstead of God! For so, the Man is become like one of us! He can reach the Tree of Life he thinks, and eat and live for ever! It cannot be he shou'd cry to me at last; surely the Self-Sufficient Creature can't need me; he shall have the Honour to be his own Helper and Saviour! My long refused Grace can't be sought for now! I shou'd have thought such a vain Creature wou'd ever have been too proud to beg, and fuch a fufficient One too full to have ever wanted me. So may the abject Suits of a grov'ling Soul be despis'd at last, who has been swell'd with lofty Imaginations of himfelf all his Life long. Surely he scorneth Scorners, and giveth Grace to the Lowly.

4. God has been mockt with too many Lies and false Promises of Reforming, to expect extraordinary Favours from him at the last. Under awak'ning Providences fober Thoughts have been entertain'd, and rash Vows been multiply'd, and as often forgot again when God has spar'd and try'd the Man. And now when indeed Death comes, he falls to his old Work again, like the Mariners, and makes Vows. It is a wonder he dare look up again to that God whom he has so often ly'd unto, his past Affronts to whom he must needs call to mind. Nec vivimus unquam, we never mind to live as we fay we will from Day to Day; for ever are purposing but never perform. We pay old Promises with new ones, atone for one Delusion by another, as if we ' wou'd tantalize God, and feed his Expectations with Air. Satan fills the Heart to lye, as was faid of Ananias, and the Holy Ghoft forfakes ere be possesses.

5. And lastly, A late Repentance is too lame

and fickly a Thing to offer unto God with Confidence of his Acceptance. When we have refused him the Prime and Strength of our Lives. now to defire him to accept of the Dregs. It is fuch an Offering as none wou'd make unto their Governour, nor accept of for Penitence or Satisfaction from fuch as trespass against them. To tender the Refuse, the Bran, the Garbage for Sacrifice. 'The Lees of our Lives, fays one, the Leavings of our Lufts, and the Scraps of the Devil's Table. Will God accept the Carcass instead of a Living Sacrifice? With what Face dare we bring to him that which we know not where else to bestow. The Honour of his Altar calls for a goodly Sacrifice, and the Law was very strict in requiring one : And as the Priests wou'd have refused the Lame, the Blind, the Diseased, the Blemisht, if brought to the Door of the Tabernacle; so may the Sinner fear being rejected, who wou'd at last Cast lay himself in all his Filthiness at the Gate of Heaven. And what the Man calls Repentance at the last, is a sudden, flavish, selfish, lame Thing: Miserably maimed and deform'd: A mishapen untimely Birth, born as foon as conceived; arriv'd at no perfect Form; in nothing like unto the Workmanship of God, utterly void of the Beauty and Life of that which is born of the Spirit. 'Tis a Selfish Thing, and no Glory or Honour was ever defign'd to the bleffed God from it: 'Tis intended only for the Flesh's fake, to fave that from the Eternal Flames its Lusts have kindled for it; and therefore also is it altogether Servile and from the dread of Hell-fire only: And taking it all together it is a very fickly and loathsome Thing, which no Man's Reason can commend, nor his Conscience but turn at.

[|] Levit. 22. 20, 21, 22.

U s E. And now from all let us learn, the great Folly of Men in delaying their Repentance on the fond Hopes and Promifes of doing it hereafter. Non est crede mibi, sapientis dicere vivam. He that truffeth in his own Heart is a Fool: Whether in his own Strength or Truth; secure in himfelf promising - I shall live to such a Length; or I will live in this or that Manner in Time to come. What a Venture is this? To the Brink of Ruin, and to the Edge of the Pit, where a Man begins to think of his Soul just as his Head grows giddy! There's infinite Cause to fear that God will not give us Grace to repent hereafter, nor accept of our late Essays, and yet Men will prefume. If it were needful to add any Thing more to convince Men it were very easie. As,

1. Is there any fuch Thing as the Hereafter which you build upon, and promise to repent in. Know you what a Day may bring forth? Have you any Lease of Life? Can you command another Day? That you shall ever wake and rise again when you lie down? Or when the Morning dawns, are you fure of living till Even-ing, and escaping every possible Accident of the Day? Have you never feen or heard of fudden Deaths? Are they rare Things in the World? Or do they never happen to any of thy Age, Complexion or Constitution? What then is this Hereafter you talk of? A Castle in the Air, an imagined Retreat which is not now, nor it's likely ever may be. Wilt thou set thy Heart on that which is not? O strange Folly! to hear a dying Creature talk of many Years to come, and what he will do then? Whereas ye know not what shall be on the Morrow: (whether you your selves shall be in the World then) for what is your Life? It is even as a Vapour, &c. It is infolent in Mortals to make bold with Futurity. While Y 2

While the word to Morrow is in thy Mouth, there may fall a Voice from Heaven—, To thee, O Man, it is spoken, Come away this Instant. Death may be stealing into the Heart in the excess of Health, having taken all the secret Avenues to it long since, not seen or felt, and set strong Guards of Malevolent Humours on them, so that a Surrender must needs follow upon the first Summons. Death often creeps like a Gunner after his unwary Game, shoots before he's seen, and the Goose falls. So Man knoweth not his time, but is snared like the filly Birds of the Air.

2. The love of Sin will grow if you live to that Hereafter you presume on. Qui non est bodie, cras minus aptus erit. Indisposition to Duty grows daily by being indulged. As if we let a Sore alone, and use no Means to search and cleanse it, it festers and incurably Gangrenes. Length of Time never did any Kindness in such a Case. So again, Weeds are eafily rooted out at their first springing up, but when they are suffer'd to take root and grow, and scatter Seeds which have increased by their sides, all must be dug up. So if an expert Enemy be suffer'd to keep possession for a while, he entrenches himself strongly and will not easily be driven out again. So a Traveller once out of his Way, the longer he goes on the more Way has he to beat back with a heavy Pace: and so they that work wrong and confider it not have the more to unravel.

Vice grows in Stature and Strength by Habit: In some vile Practitioners it attains to Goliah's height, and defies the Army of Israel and the Sword of the Spirit. Lust wins on Men by lying in their Bosome, till at last 'tis so doated on that all is sacrific'd to it. He that can't heartily fall out

out with it to Day, is not like to take Offence and be disgusted at it to Morrow. Will Sin lose its hold (think you) by to Day's Practice? Tis against all Sense to imagine it. Or, if indulged to old Age, it may indeed leave us, not we that: and this surely is the Meaning of the carnal Heart's Promises of Repenting hereaster, scil. that it will when Desire fails, which it may with Strength and Life.

Ah miserable Fool, that loves Sin too well to repent to Day, but will promise for to Morrow when he will love it better. The very Thing that hinders now will do so more hereaster.

3. How know you how foon God may inflict Indicial Hardness? 'Tis a wonder of Mercy this has not befel you already: a Judgment dreadfully incurred by Impenitence under the Gospel; as may be gather'd from the frequent Repetition of that terrible Passage, | Hear ye indeed but understand not, see but perceive not: make the Heart of this People fat, and their Ears heavy, &c. It were a righteous Thing shou'd you after this Day be left to thy bard and impenitent Heart to treasure up unto thy self Wrath: † A Vessel reserved for destruction, baving been indured with much longsuffering in vain. Stand yet a while you may in the World, but under the Fig-tree's Curse, let no Fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever (a): And can you repent in spite of such a Curse? O terra damnata, Earth curs'd to Barrenness! To bear nothing but Briars and Thorns tho' it be rain'd upon; Fewel for the Fire. So when Ferusalem had wearied her felf with Lyes, then came the doleful Message (b); Because I have purged thee and

[|] Isa. 6. 9, 10. Matth. 13. 14. John 12. 40. Acts 28. 26. † Rom. 9. 22, 23. 11. 8. (a) Matth. 21. 19. (b) Ezek, 24. 13, 14.

thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more until I have caused my Fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it, it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither

will I (pare, neither will I repent, &c.

4. At least frequent Remorfe and tormenting Fears are like to imbitter the impenitent Life, if not given up to Hardness and Blindness. This must be the Case, if any Sense of Spiritual Things, if any Tenderness remain. Your Heart will be reproaching you as long as you live: daily 'twill condemn your profane Course, and remind you of the Day of departing and of reckoning: and while you throw off these griping Thoughts you all the while live fighting with your felf, or as among Domestick Brawls and Clamours, wherein all Quiet and Comfort of Life is loft. An unhappy Life fuch Men lead under daily Convictions, and doing Violence to themselves in stifling 'em. While they steal the sweet Pleasures of Sin, they all the while fear the barking and more the biting of their Consciences. Some indeed more boldly hector their unquiet Minds into Silence, muzling the Fury within, that elfe wou'd not suffer them to sleep so soundly. Others more Cowardly run away from themselves, having an Enemy within they are terribly afraid of, that worst of all Ghosts that calls on 'em to Reform, and rounds 'em in the Ear Magisterially, and threatens 'em if they do not. Alas! how little does fuch a Man enjoy himself in his Life of Sin? What Terrors has he in the Night, and what Morning-qualms? How broken is his Sleep and his Meals disturb'd? His Sins have their Stings, and he pays dear for the little Honey he tastes. Something truly of the Vagabond Life of Cain, driven from himself and the Face of God, and his own Passions set on him, every

one of which he thinks sometime or other will

flay bim.

Besotted Man, who takes a Course to keep himself always thus miserable, raffles away the inestimable Jewel of Peace, and enjoys not one Hour of true Pleasure and Satisfaction all his Life long! The filly Man knows not what he loses; were it but the inestable Joy of this one Thought,— Blessed be God, I feel my Heart melt in Contrition! My great Work is done! The View before me is very gay and bright! My Soul rejoyces in Hope, my Spirit in God my Saviour! For be that is Mighty has done great things for me, and boly is his Name.

This is truly to live, and he is mad that wou'd lose this Joy of Life, tho' he were indeed sure of Repenting at last; for he loses one Heaven in his Way to another. Says the wise Man, There is nothing better than that a Man shou'd rejoyce in his cwn Work, and make his Soul enjoy Good in all his Labour: He then is the happy Man that lives Religiously, for his Soul enjoys Good in all his La-

bour, and rejoyces in his Work.

foolish, because it leaves Men to die in distressing Doubts and Terrors. A dying Hour is very dark after such a way of living. No Peace can be reasonably expected supposing a Person truly Repents at last: he will however have infinite Reason to suspect his own Sincerity and Truth, nor can have any satisfying Proof of it unless God shou'd come in with the immediate Testimony of his Spirit; which is scarce to be imagined, I am sure not to be depended on.

You may have felt the diffressing Fears of a Sick-Bed in an unprepared State: O call to mind with what Anguishes you were then seiz'd, and ask your self if you are indeed willing to die thus at the last.

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Or you may have seen the Darknesses of others in a like Condition, toward whom your Souls have melted in Compassion: O Man! pity thy self, ere it comes to be thy own Case. To die in Peace and Hope is an invaluable Mercy: On this side Heaven never does a Saint look so glorious to others, nor feel so happy to himself: one sweet Transport then will make amends for all the Sorrows of this Life; as it was Consolation enough to fob to think of seeing his Redeemer in that Flesh of his which was so corrupted: it restor'd the Soul, whether the Body heal'd or no.

This is the time when Comfort will be doubly welcome as it is most needed. Is he not distracted then who takes care to deprive himself of it, as he does that begins his Repentance then? For how is it possible for him to know that he has a real disquiet at and hatred of his Sins? Indeed his Appetite is now dull and blunt, his bodily Distempers have taken away his Stomach; but shall he who was a Glutton before, therefore conclude— that his Lust is mortified? When as if Health returns, fo will his voracious Appetite again in all likelyhood: let him be tempted and he'll as fervilely yield again as ever. How easily may a Man err in judging of himfelf in the absence of Temptation? And how often has the natural Effect of a Difease been mistaken for a Change in the Mind and Soul?

The End of an inconsiderate Life is to die as a Fool. Nor were it much to make a mean Exit, and go off the Stage trembling and dispirited, if there were not Shame and everlasting Contempt after all.

Let us therefore exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin. Deceitful Sin toles Men on by sug-

fuggesting to 'em, — You may part with me hereafter, you may cast me off in Old-Age; but it never intends to part, but on the contrary to

get a fast Hold and to keep it for ever.

Moreover, Note it to be the fatal Mistake of many, as if a Promise of Repenting show'd something of a Spirit of Religion: whereas it only infers— that at present there's no Religion, no Love to God, nor Desire of Holiness; for if there were he wou'd not purpose to Repent hereaster, but set about it to rights. He confesses his present Want, while he promises for his future Conduct. Nor is it one Step toward Repenting to promise hereaster to think of it; but he only begins at all who actually, at present, sets upon it.

Behold, now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation. Know it, confider it, value it, improve it and redeem it. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; and when you cry another Day in the Shades of Death, you'll hear his sweet and desired Voice graciously answering again, I have heard thee in a Time accepted, and in the Day of Salvation I have

succour'd thee.

MATTH. XXV. 10.

-And they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage,-

7E have here some Account of Heaven, and of those that shall be admitted thither. Heaven is describ'd under a double Notion, the Presence of Christ, and the Marriage Chamber, a being with bim and at his Marriage. The Happiness of good Men at their Death is described also in two Things, 1. Their Readiness for their Departure, by a previous Preparation: they that were ready, which is plainly spoken of the Wise Virgins, and of them only. 2. Their certain Admission, the abundant Entrance administer'd to 'em, They went in with bim to the Marriage.

This Place of Nuptial Joys and Entertainment can be no other than Heaven: they that were ready must mean, whom God had elected thereunto, and in time actually fitted and prepar'd. I shall offer three Observations here, 1. That Religion is our Readiness and Preparation for Heaven, and when good Men die they are certainly admitted thither. 2. That in Heaven the Saints are with Christ, and enjoy his Presence, and it is Heaven to do fo. 3. That the Joy and Happiness of Heaven may be represented by that

of Marriage.

I. That Grace and Holiness is our Readiness and Preparation for Heaven, and when good Men die they certainly go thither. Saviour has left us this Command in the Context, Be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not

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the Son of Man cometh. We are here told of such as were and will be found ready according to his Commandment; scil. those that have Oil in their Vessels with their Lamps, i.e. Grace in their Hearts governing their Life. This prepares us for Death and Happiness after it, I. As it answers to the Promise, and is made by God a necessary Condition of the Thing. 2. As it agrees to the Nature of the Happiness of Heaven, and so is a real proper Qualification in the Person.

It has a Claim and Title from the unchangeable Truth of God, and his immutable Promifes; the Sum of all which is this, || that there is a bleffed Eternity reserv'd for good Men after this Life: and this is the utmost Security that can be given us t, even his Word which can less fail than the Heavens and Earth pass away. Nor are the Laws of the Gospel meerly Arbitrary, but of Effential Goodness; so that Conformity to them is fo to the Holiness of God and Heaven, whereby we become new and holy Creatures, and fo meet for a holy Place and Communion; from an inward Suitableness and Congruity in the Soul thereunto. There are Vessels of Wrath fitted for destruction; Wickedness naturally fits Men for the Company of Devils: and there are Veffels of Mercy prepared unto Glory; God takes no Soul to Heaven but he first qualifies for the Place.

Holiness qualifies for the Love and Company of Heaven, for the Love of Christ and all the Heavenly Spirits, to partake in theirs or to give our own. Without Holiness there wou'd be wanting Likeness, which is requisite unto Love. Contrariety of Nature wou'd beget Enmity, Antipathy and Contradiction of Will: therefore

^{||} Rom. 2. 7, 8. 5. 21. Tit. 1. 2. 1 John 2. 24. † Rom. 6. 17, 18.

can't there be any Concord between Christ and Belial.

It qualifies also for the Work of Heaven. The whole Converse and Exercise of the Blessed is most Holy for evermore. Worship is so and Praise, the everlasting Business of Heaven: but to an unholy Person these are not only Tasteless, but a Penance and Burthen. A Sty agrees to a Swine better than a swept Palace; no more can the Heavenly World be relished without a Divine and Heavenly Nature. The Felicities of the other World are as to the Essence of em the very same Thing with Religion, and there is but one Pattern of Happiness, which is God.

Finally, The good Man being thus qualified for the Heavenly Felicities, he shall most certainly and immediately be taken unto 'em when he dies. The Wise went in. Said our Saviour to the repenting Thief *, This day thou halt be with me in Paradice. The Soul of Christ went to Heaven from his Cross, and so the Soul of his Confessor from his; he no where call'd in by the Way, but follow'd his Saviour, who has trodden a Path to Heaven and opened its Gates. St. Stephen + feems plainly to expect an immediate Reception, Lord Fesus, Receive my Spirit; for he saw him standing ready, and he cries to him to reach out his Hand and take him instantly to himself. St. | Paul dream'd of nothing that shou'd intervene between Death and Heaven as to himself; to depart was to be with Christ in his Account and Hope, and to be absent from the Body is to be present with the Lord. So also the Parable seems fairly to reprefent it as to Lazarus (a), his departing Spirit

^{*} Luke 23.43. † Acts 7.59. || Phil. 1.23. 2 Cor. 5.6,8. (a) Luke 16.22.

straight carried by Angels into Abraham's Bosom. Where Abraham is thither all dying Saints do immediately go, and certainly that is not into a Place of Purgation separate and distant from Heaven.

I shall not stay here to expose the Popish Fable of Purgatory, a Doctrine calculated for immense Gains, and therefore meritoriously Cano-

niz'd. But,

Godly Man: The Lord hath set him apart for him-self. Let it incourage him in his Way, to run on with Patience, having the End and Crown in his Eye. O blessed Hope! Our Anchor, both sure and stedsast, what Storms may we not ride out? Our strong Consolation, what Crosses shou'd we not endure, what Shames not despise for thee? Heathens have spoken Magnissent Things from their poor Hopes of an unknown Immortality, having both Life and Death in great Contempt; but how unspeakable and full of glorying shou'd the instructed Believer's foy be, who can go to meet his Death, and open his Breast, and say with the Apostle, I am willing to be offer'd.

2. The Doctrine of an affured Heaven referv'd for good Men shou'd persuade the Wicked to repent and turn: to break off those Sins which will infallibly separate the Soul from God, and to sollow after that Holiness, without which no Man shall see God. Verily, as sure as the good Man goes to Heaven, so surely shall the Wicked be turned into Hell. Consider ere you leave this World, when you'll too sadly perceive the Price of the other, and the greatness of your Loss and your

Wretchedness therein.

3. Let it put us upon examining our felves, what our habitual and actual Readiness is. If the Bridegroom were coming, am I prepared? Is the

the Grace of God in me? Is it in Exercise? Am I on my Watch and Guard? 'Tis a most awful and important Enquiry. Do you desire to be made Holy, and is it your Care and Labour to live Holily? This is the Evidence and Fruit of Grace, and the Earnest of Glory to come, the Pledge of suture Happiness: Now he that bath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

How is Fellowship with God priz'd, and in its Perfection hunger'd after? There is an Intercourse between God and those Souls that are preparing for his Presence above. Our Closets and these Seats must very much witness for or against us, and inform us what we have had to do with Heaven, and in what readiness we are for it. If we walk with God, as Enoch did, God will take us as he did him: not translate us indeed so as not to see Death, but take our Souls

to endless Blessedness when we do die.

Finally, How do your Souls esteem of and apply to the Righteousness of Christ? Is your own Righteousness a filthy Rag in your Eyes? Do you despise and loath it and tear it off, abhorring your own Soul? Does the Sense of your own Emptiness and Sinfulness cause you to sty to the Name and Merits, to the Righteousness, Fulness and All-sufficiency of Christ, for Pardon and Eternal Life? This is indeed your Readiness for Privileges, for Duties, for Sufferings, for Death it self, and for Heaven after it.

II. In Heaven the Saints are with Christ, and it is a great part of the Blessedness of Heaven to enjoy his Presence. They that were ready went in with him, i. e. with Christ the Bridegroom. This is made a principal Thing in the Description of Heaven

Heaven throughout the New Testament, being often put for the whole of it, as indeed to be with Christ is a sufficient Heaven for a Christian; enough Pleasure, Honour, Blessedness, and all his

Defire, for all his Love is plac'd here.

What Heaven does the Saviour promise his Disciples but this? (a) I will receive you to my self, that where I am ye may be also: And again, Where I am, there shall my Servant be. This was the gracious Word spoken to the repenting Thief: (b) Thou halt be with me in Paradice. Had the last Word been left out, yet it had been fufficiently imply'd; for to be with Christ is of necessity to be in Paradice. This is the Heaven our Saviour claim'd for his Followers, (c) Father, I will that they, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am. And therefore this is the Heaven, which the Apostle look'd for, and assures all Believers of (d), I desire to depart and to be with Christ, says he of himself, and we shall be ever with the Lord, writes he to the Thessalonians.

Other Things are the additional Joys of Heaven, but the Substantial and Essential Joy thereof is God himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, God-Man, Mediator: The Joy of Heaven rises here and here it terminates; In thy presence is fulness of Joy, and the Lamb is the Light there-

of (e).

There is no Honour above this, (f) They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy: to him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my Throne. What more cou'd Ambition prompt the two Brethren to ask?

⁽a) John 14. 2, 3. 12. 26. (b) Luke 23. 43. (c) John 17. 24. (d) Phil. 1. 23. 1 Theff. 4. 17. 2 Cor. 5. 8. (e) Pfalm 16. 11. Rev. 21. 23. 22. 5. (f) Rev. 3. 4, 21. Matth. 20. 21.

The Beatifick Vision flows hence, the Sight which Moses long'd for, but was told it cou'd not be till after Death: then not the back Parts only shall be seen but Face to Face. When the Disciples faw their Lord transfigured in the H. Mount, they thought it almost a sufficient Heaven, and were for fetting up their Rest there; Lord, said they, it is good for us to be here, let us build here three Tabernacles, &c. Christ in his Glory seem'd a Heaven to them, tho' only two glorified Saints with him: How much more above will it feem fo, where Millions are about his Throne? Philip wou'd ask no more Heaven than this, * Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth. Yes truly, well might it tho' we were never to see one of the glorified Spirits that stand in his Presence: and it is the fame thing to behold the glorified Saviour, for be that fees him feeth the Father. But to be more particular in this Argument,

r. To be with Christ is our Heaven and Blesfedness, if we consider who he is, and what his Glories are. He is the Eternal and Only-begotten Son of God, and as Mediator in the highest Dignity and Authority: the Lord of Glory, posses'd of Infinite Majesty and Supreme Dominion, His Name is above every name; Angels, Principalities, and Powers being made subject to him. So that to stand in his Presence is infinitely more Honour, than the Royal and Imperial Presence on Earth can be pretended. Also the Wisdom and Perfections of this Lord are equal to his Grandure and Magnificence; he is the Wisdom of God: Solomon's Wisdom was more than all his other Royalties, in the Eyes of the discerning Queen of Sheba. And what will not fuch a Lord, poffefs'd of infinite Glory and Bleffedness, prepare for his Fa-

^{*} John 14. 8.

vourites! No Mind can conceive hereof, it must be surable to his own immense Felicities. As a Prince's Gifts on Earth are above other Mens, comporting to the Riches and Name of his Kingdom; so the Divine Munificence will to his own Infinite Goodness and Dominion; such was Abasuerus his Feat unto all his Princes and Nobles, to show the Riches of his Glorious Kingdom, and the Honour of his Excellent Majesty. We are told among other Things of Pomp and State, that the Guests fat on Beds of Gold and Silver and Marble, that the Veffels of Gold they drank in were of various Workmanship and Figure, and that there was Royal Wine in abundance according to the State of a King. And now do but raise your Thoughts from Earth to Heaven, and from a Mortal Man to the Eternal God and to the Throne of Christ; (I say, unto the Throne of Christ, to whom is given Dominion and Glory and a Kingdom, that all Peoples, Nations and Languages shou'd serve him, his Dominion is an Everlafting Dominion which shall not pass away.) And say— if the Saints have not greater Things to look for, fuch as Eye bath not feen? As our King is greater than the Kings of the Earth, and his Throne than their Thrones, fo will be his Gifts, and fo the Honour and Bleffedness of his Courts; who is the only Potentate.

2. Consider the infinite Love which our Lord does bear unto his Favourites. To be with him is infallibly to enjoy that: all his Subjects are Elect, they all live in his Courts, all are privileg'd and dignified, ennobled and made Kings and

Priests unto God.

'Tis a peculiar Love: of a Friend, I have called you Friends: of a Brother, Go tell my Brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father: 'Tis the Love of a Father to his Family, of a Shepherd to his Flock, Flock, of an Owner to his Propriety; and the dear Gift of his Father, as well as the Price of his own Blood that has purchased us, endears us to him; as the Travel and torn Bowels of a Mother does the Babe to her. Finally, 'Tis the Love of the Head unto the Members, every one of which are dear to it: But, to say infinitely more than all this, 'tis the Love of God to his Elect.' Tis Heaven and Blessedness to partake in this Love; and Life from the Dead to read it in our

Judge's Face.

With what unspeakable Pleasure shall we call to mind the past Love that once carried him to a Cross for our Salvation! O killing Pleasure, when we shall see the very Jesus who loved us and washed away our Sins in his own Blood! How will our Souls sail as we see those Eternal Marks of his Love, the Prints of the Spear and Nails! So Thomas his Spirit sank as he put his Hand into his Saviour's Side, and his Fingers into his gored Hands, and he cry'd out—My Lord, and my God. We can hardly conceive with what Affection as well as Astonishment he spake those Words, but we shall hereafter know, when we also shall see the same Wounds, and Tokens of his unknown Love.

And this Love that endured so much for us once on Earth, what will it not do for and befow upon us when we come to Heaven? Will it count any Thing too Great or Good for them, whom he once laid in his Bosom, and whose Sins he bare in his own Body on the Tree? The Happiness of the Saints is in Proportion to the Love of Christ, to them: as the length and breadth, and beigth and depth of that can't be measured, so neither can their Felicity, which results from it, and can have no less Bound and Measure. A most ravishing Meditation this.

3. To

To be with Christ must needs be Heaven and Blessedness to the Saints, if we do but consider further the Love which their Souls do bear to him. There cou'd be no Heaven to a Saint if Christ were absent, for they wou'd want the Delight of their Souls, and what cou'd content em! As when our Hearts are bound up in any Person, we can't be easie without his Company. What a Disappointment wou'd it be to those that have enjoy'd themselves in this Life, only in the Hope of going to Christ at Death, not to find him then? Suppose they were carried into glorious Cities and Mansions, the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, and were told that there are the Apartments of all that are departed in Christ; that Abraham, Moses, Elias, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs, were all there, living in unspeakable Pleasure and Holiness, only indeed that the Vision of God and the immediate Presence of Christ were wanting, else Heaven had nothing but what is enjoyed here; that Myriads of Angels dwelt here also, and every Day there were Visions from Heaven and Revelations made to them, both of the Love of God and of Heavenly Mysteries: suppose, I say, a Saint departed were carried only to fuch a Mount Sion, which were only the General Affembly of Saints, and the Innumerable Company of Holy Angels; wou'd it feem Heaven to him, if it were not also the immediate Presence of God the Judge of all, and of Jesus the Mediator? Tho' Moses and Elias were in the Mount, and not Fefus with them, no considerate Disciple wou'd be for setting up a Tabernacle there. For tho' the Company, and Love, and Employment, and Excellencies, and Glories of the Saints be very Great; yet the Saviour reigns alone and unrival'd in the Saints Heart.

So a Bride on her Marriage-Day wou'd take little Delight in her Friendly Guefts, or in the Virgins her Companions, if the Bridegroom abfented. The Holy Spouse was uneasy as Christ withdrew, for (says she) 'tis my Beloved, and be whom my Soul loveth. Tell me (cries she) where thou feedest, and makest thy Flocks to rest: That was her Heaven and Paradice, wherever He is. The Saint knows no Happiness in this Life without this, nor looks for any to come separately from it: This is all he craves, Whom have I in Heaven but thee, &c. ||. Then that Desire comes which is a Tree of Life.

4. To be with Christ is our Heaven and last Happiness, because his Presence, and the Vision of his Face, have a transforming Power, and produce a perfect Conformity to his Holiness and Glory. This the Apostle John teaches expressly, † We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. As there can be no seeing Christ without being like him, so the seeing Him will cause and finish this Likeness in Us; both in respect of the Glories of his Body, and the Holiness of

his Nature.

ness to His Glorious Body. There is a Personal Glory of the Mediator, which the Disciples, in the Mount of Transfiguration, beheld an Image of, which Saul saw a Beam of and it blinded him, which Stephen saw more distinctly; and, above all, the Divine was favour'd with many Visions of. Now the Dust of Believers shall be raised in Glory after this bright Exemplar*, He shall change our vile Body, and fashion it according to his own most glorious Body. That is the Pattern

[|] Pfalm 17. 15. 42. 1, 2, 3. Prov. 13. 12, 19. † 1 Jo. 3. 1, 2. Phil. 3. 21. 1 Cor. 15. 48, 49.

of our Glory: As is the Heavenly, such are they also that are Heavenly, and as we have born the Image of the Earthly, we shall also the Image of the Heavenly. As we now have fuch a Body as Adam's, which was frail and corruptible; so after the Refurrection the Saints will have Glorious Bodies like that which Christ has in Heaven. Nor need we wonder at the Change, fince it indeed looks but as a natural Effect: for a prepar'd Subject must needs be irradiated by being placed near to a Body of Light; as the Planets by the Sun in the Heavens: And it should seem that the Bodies of Men would be fo, if this unknown Glory should pass before them, and shoot its direct Rays on them; as it happen'd to Moses, the Skin of whose Face shone so, that Aaron and the Children of Ifrael were afraid to come nigh him. But, after all, we may refolve it into the good Pleafure and Power of God, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all Things unto himself. And this only Reason of it may satisfy us it will be fo, because it were incongruous, that the Body should not partake in the Brightness of the Head; the Members would else not feem to belong to it. At this Distance we look not to be transform'd, 'tis not to be wonder'd at we are not; but when we shall be with Him, tis natural to expect it: And fince God has reveal'd to Us that fo it will be, the Reason of Man tells him also, that it is a thing very congruous and natural.

2. To be with Christ, must also infer and produce Conformity of Soul to him in Holiness. I will behold thy Face in Righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy Likeness. He look'd for a Persection in Holiness after Death, and in this he especially thinks Happiness to consist: The Holy Image of God is restored in the Soul

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by Grace, which is perfected after Death, and so commences compleat Glory and Blessedness. If we might be with Christ, and not be made perfect in Holiness, it wou'd not be our Blessedness to be with Him: But for this very Reason is it our Blessedness, because no Sin can be where He is, nor any Impersection, for He is Light, and in Him, or near Him, is no Darkness at all: And that must needs be a Blessed State whither Sin, nor any of its cursed Fruits, no kind of Evil, can enter. A Disposition of Mind compleatly Pure and Holy, can't admit of any degree of Inselicity. There is no Guilt, nor can be any Sorrow; there's a Divine Nature, and must be all Divine Peace and Joy.

I might add also, That to be with Christ necessarily infers a Likeness to him in Immortality, Knowledge, Wisdom, &c. all which wou'd further confirm the Truth in hand, That it is our

Heaven and Happiness to be with Him.

The Use is, I. To recommend an Interest in Christ as Our only Blessedness, and to signify to the Believer his Immense Happiness therein. If His Presence make Heaven, then what do You possess who are united to him, in whom He dwells! Every Saint has herein a Heaven upon Earth, in the Presence of Christ with him, the Love of Christ to him, the Image of Christ on him. Let this be the Heaven our Souls do long to posses; || the Earnest and Beginning of that to come.

2. If to be with Christ be Heaven, let it teach Us to prize his House and Ordinances, and all the Visits of his Spirit. We are herein taken up to Heaven, or the Lord of Heaven is in the

Phil 3, 8, 9, 10, office of to be summer of the second of

midst of us t. No wonder that Holy Souls fet so much by his Stated, Solemn Worship: No wonder that David (a) so thirsts and pants after the Sanctuary, and counts them bleffed that dwell there. It is at least the Gate of Heaven (b); His Word and his Spirit are here, and his Angels afcending and descending. Remember whom you have to do with, and let it both awe you and delight you: How dreadful is the Presence of Christ our Judge, whose Eyes are as a Flame of Fire, and who will make all the Churches to know that he fearches the Heart; but, on the other hand. the Honour of His Presence, the Joy and Benefit of Communion, is not to be sufficiently understood, nor to be equal'd by any thing below the Heavenly Vision.

2. Let it raise in Us the more ardent Desire, after the Heavenly State. Christ is there, and where elfe should the Christian's Heart be? The Head is there, where should the Members be? There the Believer's Treasure is, and his Life is MELLY ASSET IN THE

hid with Christ in God.

It should make this World seem to us a Wilderness, and Us to our selves Pilgrims and Strangers in it; that no more of Christ is to be feen and enjoy'd here below. The Heavens have receiv'd Him till the Restoration of all Things, when from thence we look for him the Second Time, whither, the mean while, we should be often lifting our Minds and our Eyes, and nothing but the serving Him here, should weigh against our Defires of being with Him Above (c).

4. And laftly, How wretched are the Impenitent and Unbelieving like to be for ever, who can never enjoy Christ; never once see

[†] Matth. 18. 20. (a) Pfalm 84. 1, 2, &c. (b) Gen. 28. (c) Phil. 1. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

his Face but as an Enemy and angry Judge, to be bid depart accursed from Him. They that be far from Him do perish: They go to the Cursed Spirits of Darkness, to be tormented by and with them for ever and ever. Holy David prays, Cast me not away from thy Presence. An infinite Loss! which he might well deprecate. Can you think of parting, O Sinner! and profanely shake Hands with Christ and Heaven for evermore? Yet this is not all; Christ will not leave You so, tho' You wou'd Him; but You shall be punished with an Everlasting Destruction from His Presence, and from the Glory of His Power, when He shall come to be glorify'd in his Saints, and to be admir'd in them that believe.

III. The last Observation is, That the Heavenly State may be properly represented by a Marriage. They went in with him to the Marriage. The Place of Nuptial Entertainment is here Suppos'd, and the Nuptial Joys there. Nor these barely of a mean and common Marriage, but of a Royal and Divine Person; for the Joys of this are much beyond those of lower Quality and Degree, and only fit to shadow out the Felicities of the Bleffed Above. The Comparison may well be taken from the Top of this World: As we read, * The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King that made a Marriage for his Son. The Espousals of Princes are ordinarily celebrated with great Magnificence and Triumph; the Kingdoms are moved at them, the Streets ring with Joy, and the Nights are enlighten'd with Fires: And, fetting aside the Vanity and Sin that usually attend such Occasions of rejoycing, scarce any thing in This Life is more

Matth. 22. 1, 2, 3. 25 (45 162 162 16 1 104 (4)

meet to paint out to us the Joys of Another, and the Reception which Believers in Christ shall find from Him. and and and an arrest are

The Holy Ghost has greatly honour'd the Marriage State here, by describing Heaven to Us under this Relation. There is also a famous Text to this purpose +, The Marriage of the Lamb is come, and his Wife bath made her felf ready : and bleffed are they that are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. I fall in with those that rather refer these Words to the End of the World, because the Supper is a thing consequent upon the Marriage, and follows the Confummation of all; and therefore most naturally may fignify the Eternal Entertainment of the Bleffed

in Glory.

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I shall endeavour not to repeat what is faid relating to this Allusion in the First Discourse on this Parable, and therefore shall omit many Things which are there said. Only as I there enter'd a Caution to my self and the Reader, fo I wou'd here repeat it, scil. That we do not fo much as in Thought defile the Allusion which the Holy Ghost has fanctify'd. The Subject is Sacred, and calls for Purity of Mind and Reverence. Let us therefore throw out of our Souls every loofe and fleshly Idea, carrying along with us our Saviour's Words |, They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection of the Dead, neither marry nor are given in Marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the Angels, and are the Children of God, being the Children of the Resurrection. Our Life in Heaven, if ever we come there, is no other than the Angels is: And, indeed, in a State of Immortality, where there's no Death, nor any

[†] Rev. 19. 7, 9. | Luke 20. 34, 35, 36.

Translation to another Place, nor to be any Succession of Generations to supply it with Inhabitants, why shou'd there be Marriage? When, moreover, it is raised a Spiritual Body, of a subtle and refin'd Contexture, endu'd and fortify'd with Spiritual Qualities, wholly suited to Spiritual Objects and Exercises, and not standing in need of any present Natural Supports, nor being able to relish present Bodily Resreshments. And now I come more particularly to say, why these Spiritual Felicities may, in any Respects,

be liken'd to a Marriage. As,

1. In that Heaven is also represented to Us as a Place and Time of Festival. So is the Kingdom of Grace and Glory also spoken of and so rife was the Notion of Old, that to eat Bread in the Kingdom of God, was a Proverbial Speech for the Enjoyments of Heaven: Eternal Life being thus shadow'd out by that which is the Staff of this Life: The greatest and most comprehensive Bleffing among Earthly Things being the most apt Hieroglyphick of Heavenly. And so the most generous Liquid; I will not drink of the Fruit of the Vine, until the Day that I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom. The Carnality of the Allegory must be wholly removed out of our Thoughts. The Feaft is Intellectual, no refin'd Luxury of the Heathen Elizium, or the more gross Paradice of Mahomet. Heaven is all Spiritual; a Spirit is the Object of the Bleffedness there, even G O D; and Spirits are the Subjects of it, even Angels, and the Souls of Men; Spiritual are the Exercises there, even Praise; and so the Fruit of it, even Knowledge, Holiness, and Joy. We, indeed, expect the Re-

^{||} Matth. 22. 4. Prov. 9. 1, 2, 3. Luke 14. 15. Matth. 26. 29.

furrection Body, but we look only for Angels Food, in a higher Sense than Manna and Quails are called fo. Christ himself is the True Bread which the Glorify'ddo live on; in whom is Infinite Truth, Wifdom and Knowledge for our Minds to improve in, and Infinite Holiness and Goodness to be deriv'd into our Hearts. The Bleffed do drink for ever of the Fountain of all Intellectual and Moral Perfection. Spirits feed by Contemplation on, and Communion with, the Infinite Good, whereof they have a high Guft, and receive a real and true Nourishment; growing in Wisdom, Holiness, and Joy. The Tree of Life and of Knowledge grow together in the Paradice of God, and are become One; truly good for Food, and to be desir'd to make one wife, as well as pleasant to the Eye: It is no Guile of the Serpent to fay of this, In the Day thou eatest thou shalt be like God for Holiness and for Knowledge. And as there is this Abundance and Infinite Store of Provision for the Heavenly Feast, so there are Multitudes of Noble and Illustrious Guests, Crown'd Saints, among whom there are the Epithalamiums, or Nuptial Songs, of Praife and Congratulation, in Honour of the Heavenly Bridegroom. There every one speaks of His Glories, all Mouths are full of His Praise; on whom all Eyes are turn'd, and to whom all Hearts; and all Tongues and Harps tun'd to celebrate His Perfections, and Noble Acts of Power and of Grace. Heaven commands this, as fuiting the Great Occasion and Solemnity, and every Coelectial Mind does chearfully obey: A Voice came out of the Throne, faying, Praife our God, all ye his Servants, and ye that fear him both small and great. And I heard as it were the Voice

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Rev. 19. 5, 6, 7.

of a great Multitude, and as the Voice of many Waters, and as the Voice of mighty Thunderings, saying, Alleluja, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth: Let us be glad and rejoyce, and give Honour to him; for the Marriage of the Lamb is come—. So Hea-

ven is represented by a Joyous Festival.

2. This Festival follows upon the Believers actual Possession of the Supream Object of their Love. He that bath the Bride is the Bridegroom: So the Saints in Heaven bave Christ; and their Possession of Him consists in having his Immediate, Visible, Bodily Presence; (a) in Cohabitation, and dwelling in the same Place, having but one Home; in intimate Knowledge and Acquaintance (b), even as we are known, to the utmost Capacity of our Nature; not that we shall know God in that Fulness and Perfection that he knows Us, but as fully as our Natures will admit of it, or take in the Incomprehensible Object; for nothing can perceive or apprehend beyond its own Measure, the Limits of its Nature, but then it knows a Thing perfeetly when ad ultimum sui, to the Top of its Faculties and Capacity, and Angels themselves know God no otherwise, all Created Beings being necessarily Finite: And yet the utmost Knowledge possible of God, and Christ, and of all the Divine Glories, we must needs attain unto, because we shall see Face to Face; so that there will be no need of a (c) Perspective Glass, as we now use to view Things a great way off, thro' many Obscurities that intercept our Sight; but as we view Things near us with the naked Eye, in which Case the Sight is more immediate, clear and certain. Nor is Knowledge all, but Intimate Union and Communion is promifed.

⁽a) Rev. 7. 15.. (b) 1 Cor. 13. 12. (c) Clark's Annot.

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A very Mysterious Text that, (d) That they may be one in us. This is spoken of Believers even on Earth, but it will not be fully understood till they come to Heaven, nor perfectly accomplish'd em. The Union by Vision will be much more sensible and perfect than this by Faith is. There will then be an Oneness of Will and Affection, without the least Defect or Variation, for evermore. Hence also will result Fellowship and Communion to the last Degree, New Communications of Light and Grace, New Revelations and Discoveries of Himself and his Love to their Souls, in the freest and fullest manner that possibly can be made: The Heart of Christ laid open to the Believer, as his is naked to Him; every Disciple is there a John, and laid in his Bosom, having his Ear with his Heart, nothing being hid or referv'd from them which they can or wou'd know; He will let them far into the Secrets of his Nature, State, Heart, and Counsels; so far as can be fitting for their Relation, or possible to their Nature, or conducive to their Happinels. | Then ye shall know that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and I in you. In a Word,

Then will be the Perfection of Love, and mutual Complacency. Then will the Love of Christ be apprehended, which is poorly conceived of in this Life; and then will those Returns of dutiful Affection be made, which have never been felt here. It is the Place of Love, which Grace is reserved for Heaven, being to out-live Faith and Hope, and to be instead of all in the Place of Vision. There will no Tenderness be wanting on the Saviour's Part, nor Ardency on the Saints. Then will the Song of

⁽d) John 17.21. | John 14. 20. 15. 15.

Songs receive its final and compleat Accomplishment; so will the delighted Saviour behold and speak of and to his Church; and so will the adoring, ravish'd, transported Saints make Him, were it possible, an equal Return. If it were possible, I say, for, as I have once and again intimated, He at last loves infinitely as God, we at our best but as Creatures; yet to the Top of Humane Thought and Tenderness, inspir'd from Heaven too, is the Church's Affection. This agrees to the Possession of the Supream Object of our Love, as that to Mar-

riage: And to difmiss the Allusion,

As they that marry take one another for Life, till Death do part, fo the Felicities of Heaven do continue for ever; because no Death is there, but it is the Place of Eternal Life. So wou'd the Marriage Relation be Eternal, if Men and Women were to pass their Immortality here: and so the Soul's Union to Christ actually is, because there can neither be Death nor Divorce in Heaven. The Refemblance is in Perpetuity, but Immortality and Eternity incomparably surpasses the Allusion. So the 'Needle is fix'd eternally to its Pole: And like it, in this Life, the Souls of Believers are toward Christ; but, alas, so feebly, that sometimes there is an observable Variation, they deviate from the Beloved Point, now thro' ill Attractives near them, now thro' the Fogs of Advertity and Affliction; and you may see the poor Heart trembling as it returns to fettle and rest it felf again: But in Heaven it shall never more be thus, but rest fix'd fully and constantly, without any Intermission and Variation for ever.

There are many Natural Inferences I might

name here; as,

r. If the Heavenly State may be 'properly' represented by a Marriage, we may furely learn that Marriage is an Honourable and Pure State here on Earth. Else it wou'd not be nam'd with that State of Purity and Holines, whereunto nothing can agree that defileth. Well might it be in Paradice, and be honour'd with our Saviour's Presence and Miracles, since it gives us a lively Representation of the Mysterious Union between Christ and his Church. And let those that have the Roman lewd Conceits of the Virtues of a Single Life, go and learn what this meaneth, They that were ready went in with him to the Marriage.

2. We learn also, that it is very decent and lawful to rejoyce and be merry on such Occasions as that of Marriage. The Joy of Heaven should be represented in it, by a sober, temperare, virtuous Mirth, or we shall marr this
Holy and Gracious Allusion, which it has pleased

the Spirit of God to make.

2. Let us take care that our Houses resemble Heaven; i.e. Let the Carriage of Husbands and Wives shadow out something of the Love and Union which there is between Christ and his Church. Let us not make void nor contemptible this Comparison by our Ill Practice and Conversation, by Ill-Nature, by Unfaithness. Comemplate on the Heavenly State, for your Rule and Motive both, in the Duties of your Relation. The Love of Christ is the Pattern and Law to Husbands, and the Church's dutiful Subjection to Him the Rule and Meafure of the Wives Behaviour. And what a Paradice wou'd every House be, and what a Heaven should we have on Earth, if we could always eye, and in any good measure come up to, these Heavenly Patterns! 4. The Songs receive its final and compleat Accomplishment; so will the delighted Saviour behold and speak of and to his Church; and so will the adoring, ravish'd, transported Saints make Him, were it possible, an equal Return. If it were possible, I say, for, as I have once and again intimated, He at last loves infinitely as God, we at our best but as Creatures; yet to the Top of Humane Thought and Tenderness, inspir'd from Heaven too, is the Church's Affection. This agrees to the Possession of the Supream Object of our Love, as that to Mar-

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4. The Misery of the Wicked appears hence; repudiated and excluded from the Marriage of Christ, none of his savour'd honour'd Guests, nor to taste of his Supper; forbidden to come near this Sacred Festival, or sure of a Challenge and Ejection with a Vengeance. Nor can they bear the Bridegroom's Face or Voice, nor the Com-

pany of his Pure Guefts.

5. But bleffed are Believers, and should be infinitely thankful for the great Honours and Happiness provided for them. To be taken into his Throne and Bosom for evermore! to bear his Name, and be unspeakably dear to him! to be sirst beautify'd by him, and then delighted in inexpressibly! How can we but be glad and rejoyce, and give Honour to Him before-hand? For in This we shall triumph, and for This we shall praise Him evermore. Said One to Christ once, Blessed are they that shall eat Bread in the Kingdom of God: And the Holy Ghost has said it over again, Blessed are they who are called to the Marriage Supper.

6. And lastly, Is Heaven our Marriage to Christ? then how abundantly rewarded will all our Prayers, and Tears, and Watchfulness, and Labours in preparing for it, be? If facob thought his Seven Years Service for Rachel but a few Days, for the Love he bare to her (a), how little shou'd the Services of a poor short Life seem to Us, for the Love we shou'd bear to Christ? Verily, they are not worthy to be named with the Glories that shall be revealed in us (b). It is but a few Seven Years at most, and it may not be so many Weeks, ere your Love will be fully answer'd, and all your Desires accomplish'd. It is a poor Love indeed to Christ, if the Hope and

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⁽a) Gen. 29. 20. (b) Rom. 8. 18.

seen a hungry Tyger devour a Morfel of Meat with hideous Grins and Snarls, and rolling Eyes of Flames: But least of all can we conceive what Agonies and Convulsions come of the Wrath of God, sent down and impress d with infinite Strength: This is the Weight that crushes, and the Wheel that breaks all the Bones.

2. The Reason of Man, illuminated by Scripture, concludes on, and firengthens our Belief of, this Truth, on divers Accounts. As, from the Glorious Rectifude of the Divine Nature, the Essential Holiness of God, to which Sin is diametrically opposite, and, consequently, must be infinitely hated by God; and it must needs be reasonable then to think and believe that He will punish it: For will He not testify his diflike of what he hates? The Effential Juflice of God proves. That there will be a Day of the Revelation of his Righteons Judgment, when there shall be a just Recribution, and the Judge of all the Earth will flay the Wicked, and show that it is far from him that they should be as the Righteous. And then as to Fatt, Has not God punish'd Sin in the Sufferings and Death of the Surety and Saviour? When he stood in the Sinner's flead, did he not drink of the bitter Cup. tho' he fo movingly deprecated it? Sin impured to Him cou'd not go unpunish'd, and shall the Impenitent Sinner escape? Christ bare the Sins of his Elect, and faristy'd Divine Justice, but Reprobate and Loft Souls shall bear their own Iniquity. And the Sufferings of Christ are as strong an Evidence that Sin cannot go unpunish'd, as the Sufferings of the Damned will be hereafter: For never was Justice more glorious and fignal, than in the Agony and Cru-

cifixion of the Son of God. In these Things we have abundant Conviction, that Sin will

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be punish'd.

And the Measure of its Punishment may be conceiv'd of, from what Almighty Power can inflict, and what it can make the Creature fubfift under. This is utterly beyond our Comprehension; for who has number'd the Vials of his Wrath, or feen what they are fill'd with? Or, The Thunder of his Power who can understand? Strong is the Lord God that judgeth! Who knoweth the Power of his Anger? According to thy Fear fo is bis Wrath. God can do all that we can fear, and infinitely more: The Lashes of Almighty Vengeance cut deep: When Infinite Strength strikes, the Blow breaks all before it. Moreover, What cannot God make the Body capable of enduring, when he raifes' it in Power: In this Sense the Bodies of the Damned are so, to fustain the heaviest Loads and not fink, searching Flames, and not dissolve nor decay. And as for the Soul in that State, it may bear vaftly; I mean, not better than it does Sufferings here, but more: Such Griefs and Pains for ever, as wou'd in a Moment now separate Soul and Body: They shall live under that which wou'd be immediate Death now; subsisting eternally in Extremity. Naked Spirits are apprehensive of the whole of their Mifery: The Sinner is told of it now, but is stupid and insensible, tho' he in a fort believes it; then his Sight of it will be clear, and his Sense quick; then the Soul will form a more just and exact Judgment of Things; no false Notions, vain Hopes, Ignorance, Doubting, or Unbelief, will hide from, or leffen to em, their real Misery; but their Perception of it is certain, perfect, and infallible. And being fo, there will be no Possibility of diverting from the Thought of it; but the Soul will be perpetually poring on its own undone wretched | Pial. 90. 11. Ifa. 30, 33. Rev. 18. 8.

State.

State. No Objects there present themselves to View, but what are miserable like it self: Nothing but Misery for the Eye and Thoughts to fix on.

II. The Punishment of Loss is one great Branch of the Future Misery of the Wicked. This is the primary and immediate Sense of the Text; The Door was fout: The Foolish are excluded, separared, banish'd from Christ and Heaven: And by what is faid in the last Discourse, we fee what they lofe—. And yet we can-not understand what, because we know not the Glories of which we speak: Those Holy Souls who best conceive of them, and most firmly believe and expect 'em, have spoken of it even as a greater Misery than the Pains of Sense: As if the former Part of the Curse were more direful than the latter; as if for Christ to say, Depart from me, were a greater Curse than what fol-lows—into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. So some of the Fathers have boldly faid, and it becomes them well, and is agreable to a Heart full of Love and Delight in God, and the Hopes of enjoying Him. But it cannot be expected that the Wicked will think fo, till in Another Life they come to fee what they have loft; as the Rich Miserable did, whose Torments were added to by seeing Abraham afar off in Blis: He that cry'd so for a Drop of Water, what did he not feel when he thought of the flowing Rivers Above; Refreshments enough for Lazarus, and Holy Spirits like him, but forbidden to him for ever.

We know that in this Life the Pain of Loss is very great, take any common Instance what so ever; to lose our Estate, Health, Sight or Hearing, Relatives, Liberty, &c. But how much

less are all these than to be an Exile from God, the Supream Happiness of our Natures? This is Cain's hard Fate, and calls for his Dolour,— My Punishment is greater than I can bear! behold, thou bast driven me away as a Fugitive and Vagabond, and from thy Face shall I be bid. So Esau life up his Voice and wept, when he found what a Bleffing he had profanely cheaply loft. O irreparable Loss, and immense! the Loss of the Soul, which the World is no Exchange for! the Loss of God, the only Perfect and Infinite Good! the Loss of unknown and Eternal Joys in His Prefence, Likeness, and Love! What can compenfate, what can support under this Loss? Sinners now live under the Hazard of it, because they are stupid and senseless, but it will be a thousand Deaths, to 'em, when God shall force them to fee and weigh their own Wretchedness; And verily, Hell will open Mens Eyes to fee, tho' they doze now. But I shall have Occasion to expatiate hereafter, in the Meditation of this Part of the Sinner's Punishment, even the Loss of Heaven, and his Exile from Christ.

III. The last Proposition is, That the Misery of Impenitent Sinners is Remediless, Irrecoverable, and Eternal. The Door is shut, never to be open'd again, no, not for their Eternal Cries and Entreaties; as it follows in the Parable; where the only and last Answer that is ever made to em, is, I know you not. What can this import less than an Everlasting Exclusion? which is the Hell of Hell. For every Good grows in its Value in Proportion to its Continuance, and so does Evil in its Aggravation. This helps to make Heaven a Perfect Felicity, because it is Eternal; and This makes Hell an Infinite Evil. A long continued Affliction is infinite Evil.

Prospect of such an Everlasting Union to him, and Participation in his Likenels, and Love, and Joy, cannot make us endure and hold out the longest Life of Man on Earth, be it under all the Temptations and Afflictions of Life. Love endureth all Things: A little Absence will not kill it, it will grow as Life spends and the World decays before us. Be not dishearten'd, Time flies apace, the better World advances towards us, your Defire is at hand: Or, if 'twere far off, yet remember, for your Comfort, when it comes twill remain for ever. And as a Woman forgets her Sorrows and Pains for the Joy of a living Child (c), so will the Believer his present Sorrows and Travel at the first Glimpse of the Face of Christ, into whose Everlasting Arms he is going. Sile of their Mongo of the sound of

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COLORD TO LEAD TO THE TANK OF THE PARTY OF T

MATTH.

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⁽A) John 16. 21.

MATTH. XXV. 10.

- And the door was shut.

HE happy and prepar'd Guests being enter'd, the Door is shut upon all others, they are utterly and finally excluded: For as Admission is not deny'd to any one Soul that is ready, so upon all the rest 'the Door of Repentance, the Door of Hope, and the Door of Salvation, is eternally shut. O doleful Condition of the Unready and finally Graceless! shut out by him that shutteth, and none can open. The Scope of the Expression is to signify them to be irrecoverably lost, and is the same with the 12th Verse, I say unto you I know you not. We may therefore note the certain Fate, the determin'd and remediless Misery of all those whom Death finds unprepar'd.

Doct. Their Fate is certain and remediless, their Misery is absolutely determin'd for evermore. Here is some Punishment or Misery of all unprepar'd Souls afferted; and one Part or Pranch of their Misery expressy nam'd, soil. that of Loss, their Exclusion from Heaven; and, sinally, the Eternity and Irrecoverableness of it plainly intimated; the Door shut, which no Means cou'd get open'd again. Agreeably to which I shall offer these Three Propositions. I. That Sin rot repented of shall be punished in the Other World. 2. That the Punishment of Loss is a great Part of the Misery of the Damned. 3. That the Fate of such is irrecoverable, and their Misery of such is irrecoverable, and their Misery of the Damned.

fery eternal.

I. That Sin not repented of shall be punish'd in the World that is to come. The Foolish do not fare as well as the Wise for ever, they do

not escape with Impunity.

1. The Scripture every where afferts this, That Punishment and Misery is surely referv'd for the Workers of Iniquity. We are told of a Judgment-Day, and the Difference there is between Men and their Works, the Distinction God will make, and the Separation that will follow. * Thinkest thou, O Man, that thou shalt escape the Judgment of God? who will render to every Man according to his Work; Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that dorb Evil. Natural Religion is built on it, and it was an establish'd Principle with the Heathens !. That a State of Misery after this Life is certain to the Wicked, as much as the Being of a God, and the Immortality of the Soul. But the Scripture has put it beyond all question, and, as it were, uncover'd the Pit and Dungeon where miserable Souls are confin'd, that if we will but use our Eyes and Ears, we may see something of their Condition, and, in a manner, hear their Cries.

We read, † That the Wicked are made for the Day of Evil; that the Unjust are reserved to the Day of Judgment to be punished, that they shall go away into everlasting Punishment. Which Punishment is known in Scripture by a Variety of most dreadful Names: 'Tis call'd emphatically Death, and the Second Death (a), because destructive of Soul and Body too: Sometimes 'tis called Destru-

^{*}Rom. 2. 3, 9. || Wilkins of Nat. Religion, Chap. 11. † Prov. 16. 4. 2 Pet. 2. 9. Matth. 25. 46. (a) 1 John 5. 17. Rev. 20. 14.

ction (b), whose end is Destruction: Sometimes Perdition (c), The Perdition of ungodly Men: Sometimes Damnation (d), How hall we escape the Damnation of Hell? And, finally, sometimes 'tis call'd the Curfe, and Wrath, and Vengeance of God (e). But lest these Names shou'd not be understood by us in all the Terrror they do truly import, therefore have we other Descriptions of the Extremity of Hell-Torments by Things most terrible to Sense (f); by a Gnawing Worm, by Blackness and Darkness, by Dewouring Fire, and by a Furnace and Lake of Fire and Brimstone; and, as the necessary Fruit of all these, by weeping, wailing, and gnashing of Teeth. The Torments of the Damned are intense and acute to that degree, as to answer to all these Causes of Anguish: What these wou'd be to the Body, that Hell is to the Soul. So the Scripture wou'd firike the Sinner's Mind with Horror thro' his Senses, and let him know, that the utmost Evils of all kinds united, or what is equivalent to them all, do await him, unless he repent. And truly, we know not how far this may be a literal Account, for as the Bodies of the Wicked are to fuffer in Hell, so Flames, and Sulphur, and Smoaky Darkness, and Wailings, may be literally there. I shall not go on to say, how the Passions of the Damned will become so many Furies in 'em; how pining Sorrow, confounding Shame, torturing Fear, wracking Despair, fruitless Desires, black Envy, Hatred, Malice, and Revenge, will, by turns, inrage and rend 'em': Nor know we how malicious and tyrannizing Devils will infult and tear their Prey; as I have

⁽b) Prov. 10. 29. Rom. 3. 16. Phil. 3. 19. (c) 1 Tim. 6. 9. 2 Pet. 3. 7. (d) John 5. 29. Rom. 13. 2. (e) Gal. 3. 10. Eph. 5. 6. Jude ver. 7. (f) Ifai. 33. 14. Matth. 13. 42. Rev. 21. 8. Matth. 8. 12. Mark 9. 48.

effectual Way to secure the Observation of his own Laws, and to deter Men from the Breach of em; to do this he annexes the most dreadful Penalty, wherein both his Wisdom and his Mercy shine forth. His Wisdom, in that no less Penalty were fufficient to fecure the Honour of his Laws, and prevent Transgression. And in-, deed many excellent and learned Men have thought, that the proportioning of the Penalty to Crimes, properly belongs to the Prudence of the Law-giver |; and that no Penalty is unjust, which is but just enough to preserve the Government from Contempt. Now we every Day fee, that so terrible as Eternal Death is in the Threatning, yet it does not restrain Men from Transgressing the Divine Laws; a lesser Penalty wou'd be quite contemptible and laught at. As in those Places in the World where Theft is punished with Death, 'fis not done by the Rule of strict Equity, but Reasons of Government call for it; 'tis thought absolutely necessary to put restraint on wild and cruel Beasts of Prey, who wou'd ridicule any less Punishment.

And fuch severe Threatnings are great Mercy in the Intention of em, being designed to deter from Transgressing, and so prevent Sussering. God wou'd persuade us, by his Terrors, from Sin and Hell. Tis an Argument that be desireth not the Death of the Sinner, but had rather be should turn and live; therefore he threatens that which is of most Power, Force and Essicacy to dissuade. The Insticting the Punishment is accidental to the Threatning, for that aims to prevent the Execution. Not Eternal Death it self does check and rein in Men, mad on their Lusts, and spur'd on by the Devil: Yet is it like a murdering

^{||} See Arch Bp. Tillotfon's Sermons on Mat. xxv. 46.

Cannon planted in our Evil Ways, and Heaven wou'd suppose us not so distracted as to run into the Mouth of it, as it roars and spits Fire and

Death in our Faces.

To conclude, No Rule of Justice requires a Proportion between the Time of Punishment or Suffering, and that wherein the Sin is committed. No Nation on Earth ever thought it reasonable: For the worst of Crimes may be committed in an Instant, as Murther, Treason, Blasphemy; yet the Punishment may be perpetual Imprisonment, Banishment, or Death. We don't think the Justice of the Government impeached, tho' a Man suffers his whole Life for an Hour's Sin. Eternal Punishment is adjusted to the Injury and Dishonour done by Sin to the Great God, his Nature, his Laws, and his Grace revealed to us; or, to the Nature of Sin as such, and not to the Time wherein it is committed.

But suppose we cou'd only say, that so God has threatned, and to be fure the Judge of all the Earth will do right; this alone were enough to silence and satisfie us. For we must at last build our Faith in another World, and of either State of it upon Scripture Testimony. This Deference we owe to what God has spoken. If he has faid that there is a World to come, and a Judgment Day; and but two States after this Life, the one of Happinels the other of Milery, and both Eternal; the one, referv'd only for good Men, the other the certain Portion of all the Wicked, we must therefore make all these Things Articles of Faith, because he has faid them who cannot deceive us nor be deceived. And the our Reason concurs in affenting to, and offers many Things in favour of these Do-Arines, which are probable Arguments, and have their proper Force and Weight; yet the FounFoundation of a Christian's Faith is but one, soil, Revelation; which we must therefore at last go upon and acquiesce in, receiving the Dostrines of Religion as indeed the Word of God; whereby our Faith stands not in the Wisdom of Man, but in the Power of God. And this must silence every Cavil which our blind and carnal Minds wou'd mutter against the Righteous Judgment of God.

The Use is, 1. We see then that there is a Hell for the Wicked. Let Atheists laugh at it, and profane Men forget it, there is however a Fire prepared for the Devil and his Servants: As surely as God is Holy and Just and True, as surely as we are Sinners and some will die impenitent. The Devil and our own Hearts may suggest to us, as the Tempter once to our first Parents, Has God indeed said—? But O beware of latent Unbelief: Be not Faithless: Wait not to be convinced by a sad Feeling and Experience: Too soon you will be certain, by a late and unprofitable Conviction. As 'tis said of the Rich Man, In Hell he lift up his Eyes, as if but then open'd, and he had believ'd nothing of it before he felt it.

2. And no doubt but there is a Heaven for Good Men. If the Chaff shall be burnt, doubtless there is a Garner for the Wheat: Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, they shall not be slain with the Wicked. As the Loss of Heaven is not the whole Misery of the Bad, so neither is Deliverance from Hell the whole Salvation of the Good. And in one no doubt are equal Degrees of Joy, as in the other of Anguish, and of equal Duration.

3. We see that God is the proper Object of the Sinner's Fear. Says our Saviour (a), I will

⁽a) Mat. 10. 28.

forewarn you whom you shall fear; him that can cast the Soul into Hell; yea, I say unto you fear him. The Threatnings are design'd to address to Mens Fears: God expects that we tremble at his Word (b); and if Almighty armed Vengeance will not daunt us, nor Everlasting Burnings terrise us we must be fearless and audacious indéed. For then, if ever, Fearfulness may seize us when we think of Dwelling with devouring Fire (c).

4. We have great Reason to bless God for the Warning he has given us. He stops us as we run headlong to Ruin, calls after us and tells our Danger, that the Pit of Destruction is before us. and argues with us why we will die. This is the Part of a Friend, and the Compassion of a Father. It carry'd the Face of some Regard to his Brethren, when be in Hell fought that Lazarus might be sent to testisse unto them, lest they should come into that Place of Torments. God has done more for us than this in his Representation of Hell, in all its frightful Circumstances, which by Moses and the Prophets, and more especially by his own Son and the Apostles, he has given us: And if we are reclaimed by the Fears of the Eternal Vengeance, God will have Praises from us for ever in Heaven, for what we have heard of Hell here.

7. This informs us of the Strength of Corruption which there is in Men, that there's a Necessity of these Terrors to be set before 'em, and so little Essect of their being so. Tho' Hell be laid open before 'em, and the Flames of the Bottomless Pit break out, lighten in their Eyes and scorch 'em, yet their Lusts are not daunted. Tho' the Hand of Vengeance appear on the Wall, and write over against the Man his

⁽b) Ifa. 66. 2. (c) 33. 14.

fupportable, tho' comparatively light in it self, but to lie Ages in Extremity, carries the utmost Horror in it. If our Pains here in the Body be extream, generally the Fits are short, and by times we have Ease; but Torments without Intermission are proper to Hell. Were the Sinner to be cast into a Furnace of Flames now, it wou'd be some Comfort to think how soon they wou'd consume him; but there is no such wretched Relief in Hell.

The Scripture is very plain, positive, and peremptory in this. We have equally express Revelation of the Eternity of the Wicked's Mifery. as of the Eternal Happiness of Good Men. Yet Self-Love and Lust bribe Men to be partial in their Belief, tho' the Evidence be one. * These shall go away into everlasting Punishment. and the Righteous into Life Eternal. They shall never see Life. Depart ye Cursed into Everlasting. Fire. He will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire. The Apostle calls it an Everlasting De-Gruction: And our Saviour describes it thus. Where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched. If now we wou'd fet our selves to invent more plain Expressions, to affirm the Eternity of Hell-Torments, we cou'd not do it. There is no avoiding or eluding the obvious Sense of these Threatnings; more especially as to these Three Particulars.

This wou'd be a great Mercy indeed to the Damned, to return into their first nothing; literally to find a fecond Death, if their Immortal Souls cou'd cease to be or live. So, 2. Are all Hopes of their Sufferings ceasing. They must be Miserable while they exist. The Smoke of their

^{*} Matth. 25. ult. John 3. 36. Matth. 3. 12. 2 Theff. 1. 9. Mark 9. 46.

Torment ascendeth for Ever and Ever. A poor Purchase were it for the Pleasures of a sew Sins, if their Torments were to end after some Ages; but there is no Period, or Term of their Ending. And, 3. The least Hope of any Intermission, of one Moment's Relief for ever, is taken away. They are tormented Day and Night for Ever and Ever As in Heaven they rest not Day and Night from praising God, so neither in Hell from Wailings. The Light of Glory is never clouded, and the Darkness below admits of no gleam of Light. As the Worm never dies, so 'tis always biting; and as the Fire is never quenched, so 'tis ever-

more burning and devouring.

And indeed confidering the Tenour of the Gospel, and the Nature of Man, 'tis naturally impossible that the Punishment of the Wicked shou'd ever cease. Consider the Sinner himself, as an Immortal Creature, or a Corrupted One. As Immortal, he must exist in spite of his own Will, he can't put an End to his own Being, nor can any Torments destroy it; being made by God to live for ever, and having by its own Sin fallen into a State of Misery, it must live for ever in Misery. As a Corrupted Creature the Will is fet to dishonour and provoke God, and to continue to Sin. They blaspheme the Author of their Plagues, and cannot Repent to give him Glory. And now let naked Reason judge, if it be likely that such cursed Creatures, remaining and growing in Disposition the Children of Hell, shou'd ever be released from their State of Torments. Not that the Damned are punished upon Fore-fight of their Wickedness that wou'd be if they liv'd longer; nor are their Sins in Hell, any Reason of their Suffering there, for the Judgment de-

[|] Rev. 14. 11. 20. 10. 21. 8.

termines their Eternal State for what is done here in the Body: But yet there's the less room for any Presumption of the Sinner's Escape, since he retains his cursed Malignity against God. I am sure this will not help forward his Release. His reprobate Mind is his Curse, to say the Truth, and by a natural Necessity daily inslicts new Torments on him.

But the Grace of God which brings us Salvation, puts it past all Dispute, that the Misery of the Sinner shall never end. The only Way of Salvation revealed to us is by the Righteousness and Sacrifice of the Son of God, and the unalterable Rule of it is by Faith and Repentance. So that the Justice of God will have Satisfaction, and if we are not interested in the Satisfaction of Christ. we must suffer for ever; ' having by Unbelief. and Impenitency cut our felves off from him, and the Vertue of his Death, and fo put our felves without the Reach and Compais of the Grace of God as it is revealed in him. There is no Repentance in Hell, or no Vertue in the Tears and Cries there: There's no Atonement in finite Sufferings, which therefore must be Eternal because the Utmost Farthing can ne'er be paid by them: And finally, Christ will come no more to fatisfie; being risen from the Dead he dieth no more, there remaineth no more sacrifice for Sin. Christ may as soon come out of Heaven. to his State of Humiliation again, as any impenitent Sinner come out of Hell.

It is very bold and faucy for any to object and fay, that it cannot agree to the Justice or Mercy of God to punish Temporary Sins with Eternal Misery: For it is not for us to say what God can do, when he has told us what he will do. Yet are we not without many Things to offer in Vindication of the Righteousness of God in

this Severity. Consider but the Infinite Majesty of God, and the least Sin against him swells to a prodigious Size: Being against the great God, the Soveraign Ruler of Heaven and Earth. And if among Men, the Dignity of a Person aggravates any Injury done him, how does an Infinite Object inhance the Guilt of Sin? The Punishment is due in proportion to the Demerit, and that is objectively Infinite, and so calls for Sufferings some way or other Infinite too, which cannot be in a finite Being, but by an Eternal Duration.

Moreover, Impenitent Sinners do but inherit their own Choice, †, Life and Death being set before them, and they call'd on, warn'd and entreated to chuse Life. So that it is their own contemptuous Slight of Heaven, a Reward equal unto the Punishment they rather chuse, and by refusing which they must needs kindle a Hell in their own Bosoms. The Punishment of Loss is to be fure their own Act, and Conscience will inflict that of Sense. Nay, It is a daring of Divine Wrath to do its worst; a kind of faying, we'll venture on, and despise the Threatning; let it come: And it is equal that he that scorns shou'd bear it. On this God himself infifts to justifie his Dealings with Sinners !! He vindicates the Equity of their Punishment, from the fair Warning given, and the free Offer of Eternal Life made.

Moreover, the Reasons and Ends of God in his governing the World must be duly weigh'd by us, and what is necessary to serve these. God proposes the Glorifying himself in the Salvation of Sinners, for which End he takes the most

[†] See Dr. Bates on the four last Things. || Deut. 30. 15. Ezek. 18. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

Doom, yet his Lust is not chill'd: The Heather Prince was less hardy than the generality of Sinners under the Gospel are; his Knees smote one against another, and his Joynts loofned, and he gave over his Impious Revel. It looks as if we were greater Proficients in Wickedness than he, and were improv'd more in Sin and hardned, that we can pretend to credit the Wrath of God revealed from Heaven, and yet not fly from it. The Power of Corruption is Gross and Palpable in refifting the natural Fears of threatning Dangers. Men are timerous enough in other Cases where there is any sensible Hazard; but they despise all unseen Powers and Plagues. There is a Devil within, a corrupt Nature of more than infernal Stubborness; for it pretends to believe and yet won't tremble.

6. Great Glory redounds unto the Death of Christ from this Doctrine of Hell-Torments; both as to the Design and Essect of it. In that he came to save us from this Place of Torments, how dear are our Engagements to him, and how great his Compassions and Care to us! He beheld us lying on the Brink of Misery and his Soul pityed us: And when we cou'd not be saved without a Satisfaction for Sin, he mercifully undertook for us, and submitted to Death to deliver us from the Curse. What cou'd have more of Grace in it than this? Or what more

worthy of God?

But the Issue and Essection was yet more Glorious in the Compleatness of his Satisfaction to the Justice of God; that he has actually wrought out Eternal Redemption for us from this Place of Misery. O let us love, and laud, and serve our Saviour! Glorious was his Undertaking, to recover us from Hell to Heaven; and illustrious the Accomplishment. Infinite is the Glory of Ransom-

Ransoming Millions of precious Souls from infinite Misery. Glorious that Death, which answers to the Everlasting Sufferings of all that do believe in him.

7. And laftly, Let what we have heard of the Torments of Hell deter us from the Ways of Sin. The End and Wages of Sin is Death: Curfed in its Fruit and Issue, as in its Nature. How infatuated are Men, who will not fee to the Conclusion of a wicked Life! As if a Man shou'd drink Poison because it is sweet to the Taste, when after a few Hours it will rack and torment infufferably. Think, I befeech you in the Fear of God, think over and over of the Choice you make of Mifery in the Caufe of it. Think what Hell is: and who can love Sin in the Faith of that? Have Men no Sense to apprehend, no Passions to be moved? What Mourning are you bringing on your selves? What Moans of Despair everlastingly to make? In which how flowly will Eternity pass? Not as the Hours fly in the Pleasures of Sin, but Extremity of Torment will feem to draw out Eternity it felf. How enraging is Forethought there? And a cruel Expectation of an eternal Succession of new Torments, or the Repetition of the Old? The Pains of all Eternity are thus united in one vast Torment, and felt all at once. Custom will not make 'em sufferable: Extream Pains never felt less for their Continuance: Nature finks by degrees under them, as crusht under its Burthen. In a word, Annihilation it felf were a great Punishment that outweighs the Pleasure of Sin: Yet compared with intense Torments, a Favour which any reasonable Creature wou'd court with Passion. To allude to Job's Words, 'Tis a Grief that cannot te throughly weigh'd, a Calamity heavyer than the Sand of the Sea; which the Strength of Stones Cr F'ella

Flesh of Brass cou'd not endure, for these glow and melt before the Flames: O that I might have my Request, and that God wou'd grant me the Thing that I long for, even that it wou'd please God to destroy me; that he wou'd let loose his Hand and cut me off. This is the vain Wish of the Damned for ever; but in Wrath they shall be made able to subsist under such Pains for Ever, as they cannot endure one Moment. And this is the utmost Pitch of Misery unto which the Divine Indignation can enable the wosul Creature.

Let us be perswaded seriously and frequently to revolve in our Minds these terrible Truths. Is this Hell, then how dreadful is God's Justice, how cursed a Thing is Sin, and how foolish are Sinners! Fly from this Wrath while there's any

Space or Poffibility for it.

What shall I say to Men that won't fear after all? Shall I bespeak 'em in the Baptist's Words*; O Generation of Vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the Wrath to come? Bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance. Or as our Saviour t, Te Serpents, we Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell? If Men will not hear this, neither wou'd they repent shou'd the Miserable below call to 'em lest they come into that Place of Torments. No, shou'd a rueful Ghost come reeking out of Hell to us, with the Fire of it visible upon him, yet it wou'd not convert those that can read the Word of God and remain calm. cold and liftless. Were Dives permitted to take one Journey to Earth again to warn his impious Brethren; shou'd he of a sudden come up before them as they were in the height of Sin, with a Stench of Brimstone on him, and show the Fire

^{*} Mat. 3. 7, 8. † 23. 33.

in his Bosom; then let him with all the Dejection and Anguish that becomes his State, and all the Earnestness that his Sense of Hell's Pains can raise him to, tell all his wretched Experience, and speak (if it were possible) all that he has felt; let him bewail himself before them. tearing his Hair, and gnashing his Teeth; let him weep and wail as in the dolour of Hell, and befeech them in Tears and Paffion; let him warn 'em by his Example, and tell 'em for what Sins he fuffers, and beg of 'em to be wife; and when he has ended his amazing Meffage, let him descend again in their Sight, and thro the divided Earth let 'em view the Imoaky Flames of the Pit, yet this wou'd not persuade them who are Proof against the written Curses of the Law of God. Men that won't lart glear

MATTH. XXV. II.

Afterward came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

The last Refuge of perishing Impenitent Sinners is to cry for Mercy, and try what Supplication will do. And at last they will beg and pray for their Lives, aloud and with vehemence, with Tears and Shrieks, as one wou'd his last and only Wish, whereon his everlasting Weal or Woe depends. So the Foolish here, when they see the Door shut upon 'em, lift up their Voice and with lamentable Cries seek for Mercy: Lord, Lord, open to us.

I might imagine various Suggestions here: As, Do the filly Sinners at all hope for Mercy? Will they they not abandon themselves to Despair, tho' they fee the Doors of Heaven shut upon 'em? But presume that they may be op'ned again?

Or see the natural Thirst after Happiness in the humane Nature! How little can Men bear to be finally Miserable? What trembling seizes at the

Sight of a dateless Misery?

Ere long Christ will be fought after, and the Place and Company of his Saints priz'd. They will shortly be own'd to be the Wife and Happy, and the Wicked will be glad of a Name and Place among the Just. Then ten thousand Worlds for such an Offer of a Saviour as they so easily slight now. At last they confess an In-

terest in him to be infinitely to be defired.

It looks as if they could now be content to be Subject to him, and were willing to be made boly, rather than perish and be for ever Miserable. They cry for Entrance, not ignorant we may think, that nothing entreth that defileth: Are they then indeed willing to be made Holy? Yes, to escape Damnation they think they cou'd now bear it, nay passionately crave and prefer it. The Time will come when Holiness will be long'd for, and Repentance be carefully fought after, and yet no Vertue in doing it. Were the Scepter of Christ then to be held out, all his Enemies wou'd kiss it, that so they might escape his Rod and his Ax.

Or shall we say, that the Soul distracted with Terrors wou'd have Happiness without Holiness. Is the Connexion of these forgotten? Strict and facred and inseparable as it is! Their Minds wholly intent on the escaping the Misery before them: if that might be done they feem not to consider or care how. For surely, in the last Place, they do not conceit that they are more prepar'd now than they were before; that they have

B b 3

have got the Oil they went to buy: To that they shou'd be taken for Words of Confidence, Lord,

Open to us. On all and and and

But I lay aside these various Glosses, which a fruitful Fancy might fuggest to it self; and shall only attend to the Nature and Scope of this Supplication of the Foolish : which is this, a miserable Soul's Sense of its State, and the Anguish that follows thereupon. For now they fee their loft Condition and bewail it, and their Prayer speaks nothing but Despair and Sorrow. The Ardor of their Cry is from their Anguish; both which are enough expressed in the Matter of their Supplication and the Manner of it too. As to the Manner of it, 'tis vehement, repeated and abrupt; like what one wou'd expect from one in Anguish: and as to the Matter of it, 'tis for a Thing of the last Importance and Necessity, for the Life of their Souls, their Eternal Salvation. Selflove must needs create Anguish in this Case, every Man being dear to himself: O 'tis for my poor Immortal Soul, Lord regard me! Must it be loft for ever? O insupportable Thought! I cannot bear it.

I shall only therefore spend a few Thoughts on the unspeakable Anguishes of wretched Souls when they find themselves determin'd to certain and remediless Misery. The Scripture sufficiently signifies to us what a quick Sense the Damned will have of Misery, and in what Accents they will express it. Eternity will not be past away stupidly, as their Life here is under the Curse of God. No more can they be vain and merry and make a Mock of Sin: the Flames or Darkness afford no Scenes for these. 'Tis the state of Torment, and the natural Fruit of that is inward Anguish, and the Effect of that weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth. The Anguishes

of the Wicked will answer to their Cause, soil, the Wrath of God and the Loss of Him and Heaven; the Lashes of Conscience, the Rage and Tumult of their Passions, the Malice of Devils, the piercing of devouring Flames, and the amazing Prospect of the Eternal Duration of all these. Incessant Restlesness and Convulsions must needs come of these hideous Causes; for what shou'd follow upon Indignation and Wrath but Tribulation and Anguish? And what of that but flowing Tears, and gnashing Teeth, and dolorous Plaints; the Eyes rolling, the Hands wringing, the Hair torn, and all the Tokens of extream Grief.

The sad Occasion in the Text justifies all this, to see the Door of Heaven shut and barr'd upon em. This is at least a Testimony born against them of their Sin and Unworthiness, that they are vile silthy Creatures and unsit to enter. What less can the Action signifie? But that they are no ways meet for the Place, Solemnity, Company and Presence: these are pure thou soul, these holy thou an ungodly Creature, more sit for a Stye than a Heaven. And now how abhorr'd must the Soul be to himself when he sees Heaven so loathe and brand him?

The Contempt herein done the Sinner will confound and pierce him: and no Contempt can be greater than to have the Door shut against him? As if the Master of the House show day, Presumptuous Wretch, you think of Admission hitter! Heaven made for you Imagine you! You a Companion of Angels, and Heir of God, and to reign with Christ? Shall Heaven be so prostituted! O Child of Hell, come no nearer! Away to your prepared Place, you may know it by your likeness to it; you resemble your Father the Devil, and one wou'd think shou'd know him, B b 4

and not take the Holy One for your Lord, nor hope that he'll own you. Say, speechless, Man, Why shou'd you come in hither, not having a Wedding Garment? The shame of thy Nakedness appears; begone and cover it in the Shades below! Is this a Pickle to come in unto the Marriage? To be an offensive Stench to the Elect Guests! So the Door is shut in slight and scorn, and they go to Shame and everlasting Contempt: and Shame as well as Fear hath Torment.

Shut out from Blifs, and left to certain and final Mifery; it is as if the Judge and Saviour shou'd say to the excluded Soul, — Now bid Adieu to all Hopes of Happiness for ever! An Exile from my Father and his Kingdom, from Me and my People for evermore! The Voice of Pleasure and of Joy be no more at all for thee! The Voice of the Bridegroom and of the Bride be no

more at all with thee! has someson de doll sliv on

Excluded from God and Christ, it is to be left to Devils to be their Prey. So when a difarmed Person flies, from a strong; and wrathful Foe pursuing at his Heels, to fome City or Caftle where he may be fafe, fees to his Amazement the Bridge drawn up, or the Gates clapp'd to against him, and himself abandon'd to the Enemies Luft; fuch is the Case of those whom Heaven excludes left to the Will of Devils, without among the Dogs, curs'd Spirits fo mean and fordid and quarrelfome. Seiz'd by the greedy Fiends, and born away in the Teeth of the derequiring Lion, they cast back a longing Eye, and bite their Tongues as they lose all Sight and Hope of the blisful Place: Loft and undone for ever, fay they of themselves, and save the Devourer the cruel Labour of tearing off their Flesh. were reministrated in a marrial of a real weather we

For Ever? fatal Word! for Ever? Who Can bear the Doom of Everlasting Woe? his Cy, will your out, when you receive as

So methought I once faw a little Image of the last Distress and Ourcries of condemned Sinners at a melancholy Affice, where the Sentence had no fooner past the Judge's Lips but they join'd in one Shriek, Mercy, my Lord! Mercy - Mercy? in Gestures, and Looks, and Tone enough to pierce every Heart, and draw Tears from every Eyeth name and manifered a stol toy !; bonoge

I can never read the Story of Efan, but it puts me in mind of the Torments that every profane Person will feel, when supplanted by their greedy Lusts they are in the last Day denied the Bleffing by Chrift. Read his Anguish, O Sinner, and realize thy own another Day when Christ disowns thee: says the Text, And when Esau heard the words of his Father, he cryed with a great and exceeding bitter Cry; and faid unto bis Father, Bless me, even me alfo, O my Father! - Haft thou not reserved a Bleffing for me ? - Haft thou but one Bleffing, my Father! - And Efau lift up his Voice and wept. Verily, O impenitent Sinner under the Gospel, thou are this profane and miserable Esau: you have a visible Right by your Baptism to your heavenly Father's Bleffing, and the Day is coming when every holy Believer shall be bleffed in his Name from the Lips of Chriff, (Come ye bleffed of my Father!) But you suffer Satan and your own Lufts to Supplant you now, you fell your Title to the Bleffing of God for less than a Mess of Pottage, and conceive not of the Loss you suffain till in the last and dreadful Day you'll find it to your inconceivable Sorrow: Then, (O believe it ere it comes) you'll lift up your Voice and weep, and with an exceeding bitter

bitter Cry will beg, Bless, Own, Open to me, even to me also, O my Lord and Saviour! More than Esau's Pain will be felt, and louder than his Cry will you roar out, when you receive as peremptory, but less mild Denial. Infinitely more than Esau's Anguish will wreck the Soul, who shall not only be deny'd the Blessing but inherit the Curse: whom as the Door of Heaven shuts upon, the Mouth of Hell opens to swallow. So Corab and his Company terrify'd the Camp of Israel with their Shrieks as the Earth opened; yet less astonishing these than the Cries of sinking Souls at the last Day.

But 'tis possible there may be something more Peculiar and Emphatical in the Words, than I have yet hinted at. Open to us: Bless me, even me also. Regard me, at least, if not others! Admit me as well as others! It is natural to Man to think it hard to suffer himself, tho' he resent not the Mifery of others; and so also to be concerned to see others happy and himself not. So then here may be conceived a double Occasion of Anguish: to be themselves excluded and to see others admitted; as to both which there may be supposed particular Personal Circumstances to increase their Anguish; as, what they and others have been, or

I. The Soul's Anguishes may be increas'd by reflecting on what he has been, or what he has thought himself to be. As for Instance,

have been thought to be. And a good how the

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the Prosperous and Honourable in this Life; seemingly the Favourites of Providence and God's Stewards and Ministers on Earth. Men that have liv'd at the Top of the World, whom others have envy'd, or courted and flatter'd and depended on as Gods on Earth: Sinners who have thought them-

themselves Some-body, distinguish'd by Providence and rais'd above their Neighbours. So the rich Man was soon in Hell, and remember'd his Purple and sumptuous Fare late on Earth: and we in another place read of the poor Condition of such as have been Great, and Mighty, and Chiefs, and

Kings too in this World.

And we may well imagine that in Hell their Anguish is redoubled, by confidering from what a delicate Life, and honourable State they fell. Lord, open to us! q. d. Surely he will confider who we are, tho' the Refuse and Dross of the World shou'd not come into Consideration. Said a Wretch once, 'I expect he'll treat me like a Gentleman as he made me. Why did he once diffinguish me, if he intend not yet to do it. Abraham's Memento to the rich Man increas'd his Pains, Son remember thou in thy life-time hadst thy good things: His past fost Life made the Rack he was now on the more painful. This is the Rage of Lucifer, to consider from whence he is fallen. If from their Earthly Crowns and Thrones Princes fall to become the base Slaves of Devils, the Crowns they once wore will burn their Temples, and the Memory of their Earthly Glories be new Flames about them. The rich Man going from his full Cups, and better Men than Lazarus he thought his Servants that flood at his Elbow to fill him out to drink; 'twas the harder to him to be scorch'd up with Thirst, and be forc'd to beg so for a Drop of Water. Job in his Temporal Afflictions found 'em greatly aggravated to him by the state of Plenty and Honour he fell from: he call'd to mind the Days when God preferv'd him, when his Candle shin'd on him, when the Almighty was yet with him, when his Children were about him, when he washed his steps in Butter, and the Rock pour'd him out Rivers of Oil;

the young Men (aw me (fays he) and bid themselves, and the Aged arose and stood up; the Princes refrained talking and laid their Hand on their Mouth, &c. All this render'd it the more grievous to be derided, become the Song and the Byword of the Children of base Men, viler than the Barth; to become an abhorring even to fuch, shun'd and spit upon by them . No doubt but there may be like Reflections in milerable Minds in Hell. As at the Ruine of Babylon t, her Mourners aggravate her Fall from her former Riches and Glories. Alas, alas! that great City, Babylon! that mighty City! For in one bour is thy Judgment come! So when the prosperous Fools. whom Pride here compasses, are swiftly cast down from their slippery Places, - how are they utterly

confumed with Terrors!

2. It may be these excluded Ones may have been (what all of us are) of the wifible Kingdom of Christ, on whom his Name has been called, and who have been honour'd with many External Privileges and Advantages. The Virgins here are Professors, who own Christ and claim a Relation to him: Lord, Lord! q.d. Have we not always call'd thee fo, and avow'd thee to be fo to us? And wilt thou not own and receive us? Shall we be excluded from thee after all? Open to us, for we are Christians, the Seed of thy Wor-shippers, Members of thy Church, the Children of thy Covenant! We have Abraham to our Father, and always boafted in thy Name and Law! We have known thy Will, and thou hast taught in our Streets! We were those that frequented thy House, and our Cry was the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord! We have eaten and drank in thy

^{*} Compare the 29. Chap. 8, 9, 10, Verses, with the 30. Chap. 1, 9, 10, Verses. † Rev. 18. 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19.

Presence, and it may be died with that Bread and Cup in our Mouths, the Memorials of what thou has done, fuffer'd and purchas'd, for the Salvation of Sinners! And yet not open to us! Why, we are not Turks and Infidels to have look'd for this Exclusion; were we so we might indeed be deny'd a Place with thee, and turn'd off to find the Fictions we had believ'd in and built upon : But we are in him that is true, found in the Faith, and of the pureft Churches of reform'd Worship and Discipline; the Children of the Kingdom, exalted unto Heaven with happy Capernaum, and yet at last shut out of it! Not know us? who are so well acquainted with thee, thy Name, Laws, Doctrine, Worship, Discipline? Not open to us? who have been of thy Church below, and fo long known there; where we have been admitted to all the Mysteries of thy Kingdom, and it may be have prophecy'd in thy Name. Ah miserable me! I look'd for other Treatment, and that my Knowledge and Profeffion and Observances wou'd have gain'd me fomething; and not ferv'd only to my greater Torment by remembring from what Light and Advantages I perish.

3. And lastly, It may be these wicked and excluded have been such as have statter'd themselves of their good Estate, and that they were in the Favour of God; and this will add to their Anguish to fall from such pleasing Dreams and Presumptions. Alas! after all deceiv'd in our selves! Not a Dram of Grace in us! and at the surthest Distance from the Love of God! So when the Hypocrites Hope perishes and his Web breaks, it dashes all his Bones into Splinters. The Man of Gifts it may be expects Preserment and a high Seat in Heaven, the Inheritance in Light for one of his Attainments; but the People that know not the Law

he thinks made for a Curfe. There are those that in Christ's Name may have cast out Devils, and done many wondrous Works, who build their Hopes hereon and will be ready to plead, - Lord, we verily thought after such our owning thee and thou us, that we if any shou'd have been admitted into thy Presence; that these Things had been an ample Declaration of thy Eternal Purposes of Grace and Everlasting Favour to us: But O the Torment to find that we must go to those very Devils, to be insulted and trampled on by 'em, over whom we once triumph'd in thy Name. To go further yet, suppose that Men fuffer Persecution for the Name of Christ, leave their native Country and part with Houses and Lands for the Gospel; (all which Men may do we know and yet be Strangers to practical Godliness:) nay, suppose they can give their Bodies to be burnt, and yet perish Eternally because void of the Love of God; what unknown Anguishes must the Revolving fuch Circumstances create always? Heaven barr'd against them, whose Souls have taken Wing with that Disciple's Thought, Lord, we have left all and follow'd thee! What shall we have therefore? O the Pains, the exquisite Pains, of a final Excision from Christ, when they have pass'd Floods and Flames in the bold Belief of going to him, and Expectation of an exalted Seat among crowned Martyrs! But to defeend again to a more common Cafe and Instance; suppose a conceited Pharifee that has built on his Alms and Prayers and voluntary Morrifications, find himfelf at last shut out among Publicans and Sinners, whom he wou'd not so much as eat or converse with here on Earth; What must not his Amazement and Pain be? Will he not be apt to fay, - Nay, Lord, I never was a Companion or Affociate with these; Open

open to me tho' not to them: They have what they deferve, what we always adjudg'd 'em to and warn'd 'em of, and what they themselves look'd for; but 'tis besides my own or other Mens Thoughts also, that I and my Order shou'd fare thus: for we thought 'if only Two were to go to Heaven that one wou'd be a Pharifee. O the Torment of this late Conviction and strange Disappointment! Ah God! to find my felf fo deceiv'd, and the Door shut even upon me! That after I have been bleffing my felf all my lifetime, that I am not as other Men, I shou'd be found among the very worst! That like wretched Elau from bunting I shou'd come flush'd with Expectation of a Bleffing, and be bolted out, or struck with that Question, who art thou? I thought I might yet insift on it and say - I am thy Son, thy First-born; the chief of thy Servants, the most zealous of thy Worshippers, a mortify'd Pharisee! And yet to find the Door but and a thousand Woes upon my Head! O unlook'd for Misery! How does it fling and pierce! How does it bruise and crush the Soul!

So I have nam'd, and it may be with too much Inlargements, some particular and personal Circumstances, which may increase the Anguish of Souls when they come to make this wretched Supplication, Lord, Lord, Open to us! O consider our Port and Parts once, and the Figure we made in the World! Or, at least our Profession and Relation to thee, and what thou hast done for us, and what we have done for thee. But,

II. It may also increase the Anguish of excluded Sinners to consider who and what they are, or have been apprehended to be, whom they shall see admitted. So when Esau heard that his Brother had been blessed, it made him cry out

out with the more Vehemence to be bleffed too; Hast thou but one Blessing, my Father? And our Lord has warn'd all those who shall finally miscarry, that they shall see others go into the Kingdom of God, and they themselves be shut out. They shall see it, and be grieved and gnash with their Teeth.

Here again are several personal Circumstances of the Virgins admitted that may give Pain to the

Ah God! to find a bad a Ah

1. To fee those admitted to the Marriage. whom we have thought meanly of in this World. and despised as much below us. For Instance. the Poor of this World, rich in Faith; but with what Pain will the Rich and Noble that die in their Sins fee this? As when the rich Man in Hell lift up his Eyes, and fam Lazarus in Glory, what cou'd he think, but this Ah! the same wretched Beegar, that lay at my Gate a few Days fince in Rags and Sores! I thought him the most offenfive and miserable Thing in being; I cou'd not behold him in his Filth, I held my Breath as I pass'd him, and stopt my Ears at his Cries; I thought it below my very Dogs to lick his Sores; but lo! where he now is! In what Reft! In what State he lies! How Glorious and Happy is he! while I have past from my good Things to a Condition ten thousand times more miserable than his was once. His Soul burfts at the Sight. with Grief and Vexation through Anger and Envy: Was I not fo worthy then as that despis'd and rotting Beggar. In 15th but 15

So when wicked Princes shall see their Subjects crowned, and themselves Slaves to Devils; when Masters shall see their Slaves Citizens of Heaven, and themselves in Bondage for ever; when the Rich shall see their poor Neighbours slowing in Abundance, and themselves naked and samishing; when the Proud shall see them exalted in Honour,

Honour, whom they have scorned as the Filth of the Earth; when the Great shall see them above 'em, who once depended on 'em, and were beholden to their Interest and Bounty; when the Wise and Learned shall see them bright Minds, who here were thought simple and ignorant, but honest and humble Hearts, while they themselves are wrapp'd in Darkness; O how will the Sight torment 'em! partly through Shame and partly Envy: O sad Change of Condition to the Proud and Wicked! Those preferr'd to 'em whom they wou'd not have set with their Dogs once! And they must sue for Admission with such as they wou'd not once have look'd upon or spoken to.

2. The Enemies of Christ will see the Door opened to them whom they have bated, oppress'd and persecuted in this World: whom they have malign'd and been unjust and cruel to, and wish'd more ill against than they cou'd act: but now those hated Enemies they see happy and above their Malice, and in vain send their impotent Curses after. The Honours done the Saints do stab these envious Souls, and every Smile in their Faces deject 'em, and make their Countenances to fall. So it was death to Haman to see the venerable few he hated array'd and mounted and Triumphing in a Princely Manner.

3. The Wicked will see those admitted, whom they thought further from Entring than them-felves, and this will give em great Torment. For

Inftance,

First, Those who are not so privileg'd and visibly own'd by God as themselves. It greatly offended the Jews to hear of a good Samaritan, and preferr'd to a Priest and Scribe of their own, who wou'd have religiously avoided the least Dealing with any of the Nation: but our Lord tells'em it wou'd much more torment'em hereaster, when

fuch as these shall find a Seat in Glory and they themselves none ||; There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you your selves thrust out: and I say unto you, That many shall come from the East, and West, and shall sit down, &c. but the Children of the Kingdom shall be

are wromed in Darknelle O have will come one

Secondly, Those whom a Man has counted Profane compared to himself. So it cut the Pharifees when our Sayiour told 'em that Publicans and Harlots wou'd go into the Kingdom of God before them. So it wou'd have string the boasting Pharifee as he left the Temple, where he had been bleffing himself on his Comparison with the Publican, if he had heard the Judgment of Heaven given against him, and that the other went away rather justified. Some go to Heaven from the Stews and Seats of Custom, and others to Hell that have spent their Lives in the Temple: But how chang'd their Looks and their Behaviour! The Publican's Eye raised and his Heart light, and the strutting Pharifee turn'd abject and wringing his Hands; revoking his vain Thanksgiving and now wishing, - Ah God I that I were even as this Publican home by street bornel ad wast oldmon

Finally, It will give Anguish to wicked Souls to see them, whom they have counted and call'd Hypocrites and Formalists admitted into Heaven, and themselves excluded. There is a double Fault I here censure, and both I think too common in the Christian World; wherein there are indeed both Formalists and Hypocrites, but not every one so whom the other pleases to call so. There may be precise Hypocrites who think every one a Formalist who is not of their Severity in Prin-

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[|] Luke 13. 28, 29, 36. Matth. 8, 11.

ciples and particular Practices; and in like Manner there may be loofe Formalifts who think every one precise and Hypocritical, that gives not himself the License and the Range they take; and 'tis to be feared that some of the Censurers on both Sides may perish, when many of the cenfur'd on each Side will meet in Heaven; the one being found Sincere and the other Spiritual Worshippers of Christ. And if their Censurers meet 'em there, methinks they must needs colour and blush and crave their Forgiveness: I am fure they will rejoyce to find themselves mistaken, and welcome 'em with open Arms. But if these Censurers on either Side perish, and behold them whom they condemned in Glory, I am fatisfied it will give 'em confounding Shame and finking Sorrow.

On the one Side, there are precise Hypocrites, rigid and full of Spiritual Pride, of a narrow uncharitable Spirit, prone to despise and judge other Men, who say— Stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holyer than thou; suppose such a one to miss of Heaven at last, but to behold those there whom he thought but carnal kind of People, because not so Nice in some Points as himself; will it not wound his Soul to think and say,— Look you, there are those whom we thought slightly superficial Christians! Above whom we held our Heads far away! And yet they have found Admission when we are re-

fused.

On the other Hand, suppose a scoffing Formalist perishes in his Profaneness, and then sees those in Heaven whom he always thought foolishly Precise, and cou'd never scarce bestow a better Name upon than Enthusiast and Fanatick, but now finds to have been serious and understanding Christians; — Will it not wound him to think C c 2

and fay,— O there are those whom we derided and mock'd at! whom we call'd Mad-men, mad as we were our selves! Whose Profession we call'd Cheat and Knavery! Whom we damn'd and sent to the Portion of Hypocrites! And to whom we apply'd all the Woes || spoken against Scribes and Pharisees! Yet what wou'd I now give for their honourable Name, and a Place among them!

4. And lastly, It will give great Anguish to them that perish, to see Heaven opened to their Relations, Acquaintance and Fellow Christians here on Earth, and shut on them. Whosoever of us finally miscarry will I trust find it thus; that some of those that dwell in the same House with them, and sit here in the same or next Seats to 'em, will get safe to Glory. And will it not prick your Hearts to see 'em there, and you not with 'em.

To fee your Parents there, you Children! And you not with them; as if you never were theirs, nor born of them, nor given by them unto God, nor inftructed in his Will, by Word or Example: your Parents Faces will be dreadful to you, and their Voice when they disown and revile you. To fee your Children there, you Parents! and you that brought 'em into the World, and into Christ's Church, not admitted with 'em into his Kingdom! and they at last asham'd of you the Instruments of their Being, while you wish you ne'er had any your felves! To fee your Brethren and Sifters enter, and you an Outcast of the Family! It shou'd seem indeed a less Torment than to meet them in Hell by the rich Man's Prayer to Abraham; but yet it must needs give Re-

ellent.

flections full of Anguish to behold them in Hap-

piness.

O may the miserable Parent say, That Heaven was first Mine by a visible Title and Claim ere it was that happy Child's! And O, may the lost Child say, It was mine by the blessed Covenant my Father brought me under as well as his, but like Esau I profanely sold my Birthright! And may the last Brother say, We might equally have shar'd the Blessing, but I Fool let the others take it!

So no doubt the Sight of our Fellow-Worshippers in Bleffedness will be insufferable if we fall thort our felves. These, (will he cry that perishes from under the Law) are they whom I once went to the House of God with; they to good Purpose indeed, I to none at all! I know their Faces again tho' they shine so, and alas! they know mine I perceive, tho' fo cover'd with Confusion, and drawn up with Grief. I have pray'd and fung Pfalms with 'em once; Who wou'd think it that hears my Groans and Blasphemies now? Often in the Temple we were together, but never must be in Heaven with them! Ah! that I had kept their happy Company, and had walk'd in their Steps, that there might never have been this woful Separation!

Nay, it may be I remember how well they thought of me! What a Great and Good Opinion they had of my Gifts and Graces! took me

for Honest, being so themselves!

Or Finally, To carry it to the last Occasion of Anguish that can be: To see your Pastors in Glory, O People of Profession! and you not with em, for whom they travel'd in Soul, and besought with Tears to bear them Company. How will all their Labours and Love come to your Mind, and Conscience will upbraid and C c 2

condemn in terrible Manner. And yet worse to behold many of my Charge and Flock in Heaven, O my Soul! as I trust I shall, and (O God forbid it!) My self a Castaway! After I have help'd to save them, having been Instrumental through Grace to instruct and quicken; convert, comfort and edifie them! O cruel Thought and horrible as a Million of Snakes folding about the Neck, hissing in the Ear, and striking their forked Tongues deep into the Breast!

Thus I have drawn, as I cou'd, the Anguishes of the foolish Virgins in their last and vain Cry, Lord, Open to us! Wherein if I have given Fancy too great a Range, yet the Design is apparent to reach and profit every one; and it will however pay for your patient Attention, if it be received as a Vision and Message from the Dead, to warn us that we come not into that Place of Torments.

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MATTH. XXV. 12.

But he answered and said, Verily I saw unto you, I know you not.

Harsh and terrible Answer indeed, as the angry Heavens sometimes seem to divide and open, only to shoot down dismal Flames and Thunders! Better were it not to have been answer'd at all, and that their last Cries had had the utter Neglect of Heaven! Ah wretched Supplication, which only gains the Repetition of a Curse, a final peremptory disdainful Disowning and Rejection! Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.

It will be fitting for us to consider the Person speaking, the Mode of Speech, and then the Import of the Words themselves. The Words in themselves import the greatest Terror, the Manner wherein they are deliver'd carries the utmost Severity in it, and when we consider whose Lips they come from, they appear much

the more aftonishing.

r. The Manner of this Answer is very awful and terrible; Verily, I say unto you. A Mode of Speaking commonly used by Christ, when he wou'd express his highest Displeasure, or when he is about to deliver some Saying of great Importance for us to heed, and lay up in our Minds, and be affected with: and, I think, so used no less than Seventy times over in the Gospels: Which we cannot therefore imagine to be without a considerable Meaning and Emphasis. And, indeed, it carries much of Majesty and Authority in it, and agrees to the Character of Cc 4

the Speaker, scil. the Sovereign Law-giver and Judge, who may speak in this authoritative and peremptory manner; and when he does so, we

ought to hear and tremble.

The Word which we read Verily, is in the Greek Amen, which is an Adverb of affirming, and fignifies || the Truth and Certainty of the Thing spoken, as also the Weight and Importance of it. A Phrase (as some observe) never used but by Christ himself, who is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness. It is understood by most as a Form of Oath, God swearing by his own Truth and Faithfulness. The Word in the Hebrew signifies Truth: And it avows the Truth of the Speaker, and of the Thing spoken also.

As the Prophets of Old were wont to introduce their Messages with Thus saith the Lord, to give Authority, and command Reverence to what they said: So Christ, who is God, the King and Law-giver, speaks from Himself, and in his own Name, I say unto you. As Absolute Monarchs use to speak, I Darius make a Decree, &c.

I say unto you, I your Lord, who am the Truth also, whom you ought to attend to with Reverence and Fear. Let what I say sink deep into you, and abide upon you. You may build upon it, its certain and unchangeable, and Heaven and Earth may pass away sooner than one Word of it fail.

I say unto you, and when I command you are to be obedient, and when I threaten you should tremble, and when I affirm who shall question or contradict? and when I sentence, who shall resist or escape the Judgment passed? Shall we not hear him that speaketh from Heaven, whose Voice once shock Heaven and Earth, the same that spake

in Thunders from Sinai, but now in a more mild and sufferable manner, yet with the same Authority. And as He there gave the Law, so here He judges and testifies according to it, telling the Man what he is, if he does not know himself, scil. a wicked Creature, and Stranger to Heaven; and therefore what he may, and what he may not expect for ever: And when He puts a Verily to it, and his own Name prefaces it, 'tis to tell him—That it is the Final Decree, Decision, and Conclusion concerning him, as to his Eternal State.

To conclude, They are very Solemn Words, and add much to the Terror of the Sentence whereunto they are the Preamble. When the poor Soul shall see his Judge raise himself in his Seat, and with a Stern Countenance begin to speak, introducing what he has to say thus,—Verily, Verily, I say unto you,— How will it tremble to think what is to follow upon such an Asseveration, whither it tends, what is to come next——! for whatever it be, it will be a Final Determination of our State, and if it prove against Us, the Words already spoken are as an

Oath, binding Him to make it good.

2. Let us a little more particularly consider the Person making this Answer: and it is very dreadful to consider it as coming from the merciful fesus, who is full of Love and Pity to the Souls of Men; whose Philanthropy is beyond Expression; whose Delights were from Everlasting with the Sons of Men; who bore the greatest Sorrows and the Cursed Death for them; who once wept over Sinners, and bled for 'em; and now 'tis the more amazing to see his Mercies clean gone, his Bowels shut up, and He that gave his Life for us deny us the least Favour! Whom shall we move to pity if He is void of it? And how

hard must a severe Word be from His gracious Mouth?

Moreover, He is the only Saviour, and if He disown us, it carries all that is searful in it. It were no great matter who knew us not, if He only did: Tho' Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy Name is from Everlasting. Whilst we can have no Hope in any other, it casts us into the last Despair to be disowned by him.

Finally, We must consider this Divine Person in his Office, as the Sovereign Judge of the World, and the Rejection founds the more dreadful from him. He is the rightful Judge, whose Authority we can't deny, nor refuse to answer at his Bar; He is also able to execute Judgment, and righteous to fee it done on the Wicked. Heaven acquiesces in his Decision, and so will the Sinner's Conscience too: No Objection nor Appeal can be made, for there is none above or after Him to appeal to, that His Judgment shou'd be examin'd over again, and revers'd. He is not a Man to repent, to do wrong and revoke it ; but the Unchangeable God, whose Word is like the Everlafting Hills which shall not be moved for ever.

Now any awful Word is a thousand times the more so for coming from his Lips; who is invested with Authority, clothed with a rightful and irresistible Power, the Only Saviour, and of Infinite Compassions; and if He condemn us, our Sentence receives all those Circumstances which can make it terrible; i. e. when He that is Supream, and Almighty, and the God of Truth, and the God of all Mercies, doth doom us to Misery: Whom shall we turn unto for Succour? since none is above Him, and since we shall not

meet

meet with any equal to that Goodness which

does destroy us.

3. It is time to weigh the Thing spoken after so Solemn an Introduction, which is not barely the Thunder, but Death too, after the Flash of Lightning: I know you not. The Phrase as mild as cou'd possibly be invented on the Occasion, and to carry a Sense so unspeakably harsh and severe. To represent which I must say negatively.

tively,

1. That it does not deny the Knowledge of their Persons and Crimes. 'Tis not the Voice of One really ignorant what they are and have been doing in the World: No fuch matter: Your Name, and all your Deeds, are enter'd down in his Book: I know thy Works, said He to Laodicea; and to Philadelphia, I know them that are of the Synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not. Happy were it for Sinners were they unknown, cou'd change their Names, and pals for Honest People, as they often do before Earthly Judicatories: but our Secret Crimes are in the Light of his Countenance, and his Register is more exact and full than that of our own Conscience. So I once saw a Criminal at the Bar, where he stood for his Life, and the Noble Judge faid to him, Fellow, I have somewhere feen thy Face before. Yes, my Lord, reply'd he, at fuch a Place, and in fuch a Caufe, I was an Evidence before your Lordship. Aye, reply'd the Judge again, with a Look and Tone mix'd of Sternness and Compassion. I fear, Friend, I am too well acquainted with you; meaning his Crimes, for which he dy'd within a few Days. So truly, O Sinner, thou art too well known to thy Judge.

2. It does not deny the taking Cognizance of the Sinner's Crimes, and the dealing with

him according to the Defert of 'em. It means. nor, That He'll not take Notice, nor concern Himself to censure and rebuke. Happy were it for Impenitent Sinners, if the Knowledge of their Sins did not oblige the Holy Judge to enquire into them, and call to an Account for them. It has indeed been a Question among Men, Whether a Judge ought at all to be fway'd by his private Knowledge of a Malefactor's Guilt? But I am fure this is no Question as to the Judgment of God which is to come. As He is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all Things. fo He will go by that Infinite and Perfect Knowledge in condemning the Guilty. It is equal and just that it should be so; nay, it were our Advantage and Safety, if we cou'd fland on our own Defence, for there can be no Error nor Injustice in God; so that we shall not be dealt amiss with either thro' Mistake or Wickedness, for they are equally far from Him. But judge He will, and that every Son and Daughter of Adam; for Every one of us shall give account of bimself to God. So far are these Words-I know you not from intimating, That Christ will not take Knowledge of Sinners Another Day, trouble Himself about them, nor be at the Pains to punish 'em. No, no: It were then a sweet Word to the Sinner, if it were literally to be understood for real Ignorance of them, or a refolved Unconcernedness about them.

More positively then: 1. They import the Voice of a Stranger. I know my Sheep, says the good Shepberd, and am known of mine: Dogs and Goats are unknown to Him. Impenitent Sinners do not acquaint themselves with Him, that they might be at Peace, and Good might come unto them. I know you not whence you are. From whence

| Luke 13. 25. John 10. 14. Job. 22. 21.

come you, that you befpeak me as one fo known to you? To what Communion and Flock of mine on Earth did you belong? I know no fuch Face or Voice among all my Sincere Worfhippers. I know you no more than I do a Pagan that never heard of me in the World; I shall no more acknowledge you than I wou'd him.

What reason then have you to expect to be of my Guests, at my Marriage, when you are utter Strangers to me? Do Men use to call such to their Wedding of whom they have no Knowledge? 'Tis a Season for Intimate Friends to meet and rejoyce together, and none else offer to intrude.

But O the Misery! to hear only a strange Word from Christ, when we shall need Him to bespeak us as a Father and a Husband! Yet it were not so much were it only a Stranger's Voice: But,

2. It is the Voice of an Enemy: And, as a provok'd mortal Enemy, He despises and desies em. Lord, Lord, fay You, who wou'd never obey me? Do You ask me to open to you, who shut Me always out of your Hearts? who all your Lifetime kick'd at my Will, and, as you cou'd, stab'd at my Honour and my Being? who were always in Rebellion, or in some Conspiracy or other, to shake my Kingdom, and take away my Crown? who no less full of Spite and Malignity than they that shed my Blood, and imprecated on themselves my Curse, did often crucify me afresh, and put me to open Shame! And now, shall I open to You, as to my Faithful Servants and Familiars? No: Know it, I am thine Enemy: I look upon thee as a hated Traitor and Rebel: I can never lay afide my Difpleasure, and be at Peace with thee!

And O the Anguish to hear Christ, the Lover of Souls, declare Himself our Eternal Adversary! When Job † did but apprehend this to be the Language of God in his Providences toward him, it made him roar out, He bath kindled his Wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his Enemies. God himself calls this a cruel Wound, * Thy Bruise is incurable, and thy Wound is grievous,—for I have wounded thee with the Wound of an Enemy, with the Chastisement of a cruel one.

All this Flame and Thunder are these Words in the Interpretation, however soft and gentle they are in the Letter. I know you not: I count you for Enemies, and not Friends, and proclaim Everlasting Enmity to you, and will keep at an Infinite Distance from you. More particularly,

r. It is a Denial of the Relation claim'd. Lord, Lord! fay the miserable Souls; but the Lord does, in effect, reply, --- I am not your Lord, nor you my Servants and Subjects, in the Sense you seem to plead: I am your Judge indeed, have Power over you, and will get me Glory of you; I cut you off as lost Malefactors from the Relation you claim, and deny your having the least Interest in me. Think of me no more for ever, nor make mention of my Name, but as the Avenger, to execute Wrath on you! So a Traitor may make his Supplication to his Sovereign as his Tragick End draws on, he may call him his Lord and King, and fubscribe in the most abject Terms that Fear on Flattery can suggest; but all comes too late, he's cut off from the Name, he has forfeited, even of the least of his Slaves.

2. It is a Denial of the Thing ask'd. I know you not. As one that turns away in Displeasure

[†] Job 19. 11. * Jer. 30, 14.

and with Contempt; fo are they repuls'd and deny'd, their Prayer is cast back in their Faces, Heaven is deaf and inexorable to their Cry. In this Sense the Word is sometimes used in Scripture, God's knowing or not knowing is put for his hearing and regarding, or not regarding and not answering. We have afflicted our Souls, and thou takest no Knowledge, i. e. so as to help us; thou seemest not to hear, thou refusest to anfwer our humble Suits. On the other hand, when God has graciously fent Help in Treuble, then the Word is us'd to express such a Favour: † Thon haft known my Soul in Advertity; i. e. heard my Cries then, and fent me timely Succour. So then in this Extremity of the Sinner, and in return to his last eager Prayer, for Christ to say I know you not, must needs carry this Sense-I won't hear or help you; you may call on, but I shan't regard or answer; you may knock, but it shall not be open'd to you. And how will this flat Denial stab the Soul! It was dreadful to fee the Door shut before, but now more killing to hear that it shall not, cannot be open'd again for ever.

3. It is a Denial of the least Complacency, Love, or Favour. Words of Sense in Scripture do import Affection, as God's knowing his Creatures is often put for his approving, loving, delighting in them. For as Sense and Knowledge do produce in us particular Affections and Effects, so Words that signify Sense and Knowledge are to be often understood to comprehend those Affections in 'em.

So when the Scripture speaks of God's knowing us in the Places following *, it is to be under-

[|] Ifai. 58. 3. † Pfalm 31. 7. * Pfal. 1. 6. 144. 3. Job 7. 17, 18. 1 Cor. 8. 3. 2 Tim. 2. 19. Pfalm 9. 10. 1 Theff. 5. 12.

flood of his Approbation and Complacency. The Lord knoweth the way of the Righteous; i. e. He approves it, is pleas'd with it, and will reward it. When the Plalmist wou'd admire the Grace of God in shewing any Kindness or Regard to Man, he does it in these Words, Lord! what is Man that thou takest knowledge of him? or the Son of Man, that thou makest account of him? The Meaning is to the full the same with Job's, What is Man,that thou (houldest set thine Heart on him? The Apofle also uses the Phrase to express the Love of God to them that love him: If any Man love God, the same is known of bim; i.e. He is lov'd again, and accepted of Him. For The Foundation of God standerb sure, baving this Seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. In all these Places God's Knowledge imports Grace and Love. And when it is spoken of Men, their knowing God or One another, it often carries the fame Senfe, and fignifies the Affection of Love in them toward God and their Neighbours: Speaking of God, fays the Pfalmift, They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee: And to the Thessalonians the Apostle writes, We beseech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you; i. e. Love 'em, effeem highly, support and encourage 'em.

You abundantly see in what Severity these Words from our Judge, I know you not, are to be interpreted: According to the obvious Usage of Scripture, they are to be understood to express his Disaffection, Anger and Hatred ||

And in this Interpretation, which is a very plain and just one, the Words carry the utmost Terror in em. They are as if our Lord should fay, Verily, I can have no regard at for all you,

Atqui vereor, ne istam Causam nullus noscat. Cis.

nor do other than loath and detest you; even with a perfect Hatred,—I count you mine Enemies. And O the Misery to be hated by the God of Love! by the Lover of Souls! to be told by Him, who cou'd once die for us, that now He infinitely and everlastingly abhors us.

And now, O Sinner! how do these Words found in thy Ears? and how shou'd they peirce thy Heart? Thus you will understand 'em Another Day, in their full Meaning and Emphasis, if you are so miserable as to have them spoken to you. Then will you feel the whole Weight of this Curse, the Sting of this Expression of Divine Wrath, and will roar out under it as Cain once, My Punishment is greater than I can bear! Ah! enough, and too much Torment; my Saviour not know me! to whom alone it is defirable to be related, by whom alone I wou'd wish to be acknowledg'd! whose Love and Fayour alone is worth feeking, and whose Anger and Hatred is the only thing I dread and deprecate! But, O my Soul, the Curse is past and must be endured, the Decree is establish'd, and, like the Law of the Medes and the Persians, altereth not! And now prepare for the fad Eternity before thee, and for still worse to come, the natural Consequents of such a Prologue. Do I shriek fo, and my Breaft burft afunder as I am driven from the blissful Seat? But O how long is the Shriek like to last, and to what a Note and Strain will it rife, ere I fink half way hence to the Place of Misery that awaits me? Ere I come to the Mouth of the Pit, which opens as wide to take in, as the Gates of Heaven shut close to keep out? As the furious and loathfom Fiends of the Pit are met on their own Borders, and the Flames and Stench of that Prison of Impure Dd Spirits

Spirits draw nigh with them, how will thy Shrieks rife? Thy deep Sighs grow into the loudest Yells, and most hideous Outcries? No Words can reach these Horrors, nor thought neither; and (O my Soul!) may you never feel them!

So a Limner may attempt to paint Fire, and may draw the Flames on a Piece of Cloath, fo as to startle him that looks on, and beget some Horror in his Mind; but at last none of the real Properties of Fire are there, they are not the Flames themselves; lay your naked Hand on the Peice, no Torment's felt nor Hurt receiv'd; but take the Beholder and cast him into a burning Furnace, and he foon finds the Difference between the most lively Paint and Talk of Fire, and the real Piercings of it. So tho' I have endeavour'd to draw a Landskip of the Place of Torments, and to speak of it in the most terrible Words I cou'd; yet there is nothing in all that I have faid, to what the Torments of the Damned really are: I have no Colours that can at all shew them to the Life. Yet these that I have us'd are the best, being what the Scripture supplies us with, and I have, as I cou'd, skilfully mix'd and laid'em on, both Light and Shades; and now dare fay this upon all (as our Saviour has warranted me to do) that if this Sight of Hell which we have in the Oracles of God will not affect us, neither yet should we repent and believe the one came from the dead, with the Infernal Flames visible upon him. But if neither Hearing nor Sight can make Men conceive of the Anguishes of the Damned, there is one Sense more to be wrought upon, and that is Feeling, actually experiencing and undergoing in their own Persons; and then they will find that all our present Conceptions and Words come far fhort

short of what they indeed are. God grant, that

none of us tarry for such a Conviction.

And now let the Idea we have of the Sinner's Milery deter us from his Course, and put us on instant preparing for Death, from the Apprehensions of its Consequents to the Wicked. You fee into how fad an Eternity Impenitent Souls do pals at Death, O bear it in Mind, and often realize it, that you may be never able to think of Sin, but its Punishment may also come into Mind; the Flames of Hell may flash in your Eyes, and the dolorous Cries of the Damned enter your Ears. If these will not fright you from the Wicked Man's Course, and from talking of bis Daipties, what can God do to reach your Fears, or move your Self-Love? Can you be content to be thus wretched for ever? Is there no Principle nor Law of Self-Preservation implanted in you? Or are you made without Fear? An Exception to what is faid of the Leviathan. That on Earth there is not his like? Or are you altogether faithless? For, indeed, Men are not void of Fear, but because they are of Faith: They are so profane and graceless to despile the Threatning, because they are so first to disbelieve it, or not realize it. Do but believe, and you must tremble were you a Devil.

But if you believe not, yet be abideth faithful, be cannot deny himself. You may hear the Words of God's Curse, and bless your self in your Heart, saying, I shall have Peace, tho' I walk on in the Imagination of my Heart, to add Drunkenness to Thirst; but God will the less spare, But the Anger of the Lord and his fealousy will smoke the more. Remember the Battel, and do no more! Let the Dread of God fall upon you, and drive thee to thy Knees.

Dd 2

Turn not the Threatnings into Sport, as Boys

do the Noise of their Squibs and Crackers.

To conclude, Compare all Kinds and Degrees and Instances of Anguish known in the World, if any Sorrow will be like unto thine in the Day when God shall deal with thee. When Joseph was barbarously cast into a Pit to perish there by pining Famine, his Brethren saw the Anguish of his Soul as he besought them, and yet he had Innocence and Grace to cheer him: But what will the Sinner feel, who, destitute of these, shall be thrown into the Bottomless Pit?

Job, in his fore Trials, fays, I will speak in the Anguish of my Spirit, I will complain in the Bitterness of my Soul! Am I a Sea or a Whole—? Had he such, and yet the Conscience of his own Integrity remaining? What will Lost Sinners have from the Lashes of their Consciences, and under the same evil Hand of the Devil? Only he cou'd do no more to him than he might live under; whereas his Malice is not limited (that we know of) what it shall instict on the Children of Perdition, over and beyond the corroding Conscience of Guilt, and Self-Condemnation.

We read of the Anguish of a Woman in Travail; let those that have selt that and other tormenting Pains, think how Eternity will pass upon

the Rack of Hell.

To name no more, When King Saul was at the Point of perithing, (for the Archers had hit him, and fore wounded him) how did he fue for fome kind Hand to flay him, left the Uncircumcifed should abuse him? And, if the Amalekite might be credited, he turn'd to him after he had fallen upon his own Spear, and made him his last forrowful Request, Stand upon me, I pray thee, and slay me, for Anguish is come upon me, because my Life is

yet whole in me. O Sinner, this heavy Sorrow is the nearest Image of what thine will be in Hell; where the Soul may indeed cry, and say the Truth, I am in outragious Anguishes, and my Life is whole in me! I cannot die, and yet I cannot live under what I feel! Is there no kind Hand that can rid me of my Being? O that God wou'd quite destroy me, and make an utter End of me! O Eternal Rage, to wish this in vain for evermore! This is the utmost Height of Anguish we can raise our Thoughts to, and therefore here I will break off, leaving you to imagine what it is eternally to seek after Death, and not be able to find it, and to desire to die, but to have Death slee from them.

MATTH. xxv. 13.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh.

Am arriv'd at last (thro' the Gracious Help I of God) at the Close of this long Parable, and you hear the Use and Improvement of it in one Short Inference, drawn for our Conduct and Practice, Match therefore -. And a very natural Application it is of fuch an awak'ning Subject, it being the Scope of the Whole to commend and press Watchfulness upon Men. It is a Duty frequently named and urged in the New Testament, to let us know that it belongs to our Christian Profession and Character, very peculiarly. It signifies a Wakefulness and being on our Guard. The Reason of the Duty is first more generally intimated, and then particularly expressed. It is intimated in the illative Particle, therefore; Watch, therefore Dd 2

therefore, which refers to what precedes as the Reason of the Precept: q. d. Because so many are foolish, slumbring and sleeping, and unready for the Bridegroom's Coming, and because of their unutterable Danger herein, and everlasting Misery is so found at his Coming, therefore Watch: i. e. Lest you be found without your Lamps trimmed, and Oyl in your Vessels, and so be shut out from the Marriage, and repulst when you cry for Entrance;

Watch therefore.

The particular and more . special Reason is expressed; For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. A very instructive Sentence, and ferious Admonition: Nescitis Diem, neque Horam: A Motto often writ on Dials, that as People look to fee how Day passes, they may be put in mind that their own Life is flying apace, and that tho' we know when the Sun in the Heavens will be down and Day end, yet when our Sun may fet, and the Night of Death come, we know not at all, nor which Hour of the Day we shall outlive. So teaching and monitory are the Words in themselves: But they are also a solid Reason to inforce the Precept of Watchfulness. For if we are wholly ignorant and at utter Uncertainty when we shall die and go to our Judge, and yet it is a Thing of the greatest Importance and Necessity that we be prepared and ready to go when he calls; then certainly we ought to make instant Provision, and keep a continual Watch, for fear of a Surprize, which wou'd be fatal and undoing to us.

Te know not, You are utterly ignorant of either the Day or the Hour, — Not of the Thing it self, soil. that the Son of Man will come; that you must die, and that their will be a Judgment Day; this we do know, and have the utmost Assurance of; but it is the particular Time when these Things

will

will be that we know nothing of. 'The Word " " is not to be taken strictly for that Measure of Time commonly call'd an Hour; but it signifies bere the appointed Season of our Death; as the Time appointed for our Lord's last Sufferings, is called His Hour, || His Hour was not yet come.

I will first say something about this Duty of Watchfulness, and then speak to the Motive there

made use of to inforce it.

I. I will endeavour to show the Nature, and prove the Obligation of a conftant holy Vigilance. Watch therefore: The Word has a proper and natural Sense, and an improper and metaphorical. The literal Sense you all know, as it imports a bodily Wakefulness, or resisting the Defires of Nature to fleep. And indeed the Primitive Christians thought that this and other Texts, did at least recommend to them at times t. Abstinence from Sleep for Devotion Sake; which was so commonly practis'd in those Days that they obtain'd the Name of Vigils; and when deyout People found how the Darkness and Silence of the Night help'd them to worship God with less Distraction than in the Day, they at last met in Congregations for publick Worship in the Night Season; which Conventions the Romans grew jealous of as dangerous to the State, and provided Laws against and persecuted; and some lewd People abus'd them also, and then the same Zeal that first incourag'd 'em did cause them to be forbidden and laid down.

The devout Dr. Horneck is very zealous in recommending this Religious Exercise of Vigils, abridging our selves of sleep in the Night Season,

[|] John 7. 30. See Arch—Bp. Tilletson's Sermons, Vol. 9th
Serm. 10th. † Dr. Horneck's Happy Ascetick. p. 464. &c.
D d 4

for the fake of Meditation and Prayer. He thinks (and with great Probability) that this Sort of Exercise was very early in the World among them that fear'd God. It was before Day (he observes) that Abraham arose to offer his Son, and it was in the Night that Jacob wreftled and prevailed, and David arose at Midnight to give Thanks *, and at other times all the Night made be lis Bed to fruim. Besides we read of Paul and Silas their Devotions at Midnight, and the glorious Effects of it; and a greater Example than all these might be given, even the Lord Redeemer himself, who went opart and spent the whole Night in Prayer. I know that this Practice of Vigils is not wholly neglected in our Days, and they who have been able often to attend 'em have enjoyed much fweet Communion with God in them. And indeed (as he fays) if some keep awake at Midnight to rob and steal, and others to drink and revel, shall we feldom spare an Hour of the Night to God and our Souls? Cou'd ye not watch with me one Hour? Said our Lord to them whose Eyes were heavy in the Night Season.

But I dismiss this strict and literal Sense of the Word, and pass on to the Metaphorical, in which the Word is frequently us'd in Scripture; and so it imports Vigilance of Mind, which is opposed to spiritual Sloth and Sleepiness, or habitual Inobservance, Carelessness and Negligence about the Things of our Souls: And so the Apostle opposes them, † Let not us sleep as do others, but let us

watch and be fober.

I have said before what is meant by the Virgins slumbring and sleeping ||: When we are but listless and dull as to spiritual Exercises, our Hearts and

^{*} Pfalm 119. 62. 6. 6. Acts 16. 25. Luk. 6. 12. † 1 Thefs. 5. 6. || See on v. 5.

Eyes are beavy, if we are secure and thoughtless they are clos'd and fast shut: In opposition to which, to be awake and watchful is to be thoughtful, careful, intent on the Things of our Souls; vigorous and active, diligent and constant in the Work of God; circumspect, zealous

and fervent in Spirit in his Service.

Christian's careful Attention to his Duty, and diligent Discharge of it. It implies both waking and working, as Man awaketh in the Morning to go about his Work. It is a Christian's daily Labour to pepare for the Coming of Christ, by a serious and hearty Observation of his Blessed Will. 'Tis a constant Care of our Selves and Actions*; a large Duty †, and comprehends under it the whole Care of the Christian Life, our Preparation and Provision for a blessed Eternity. This is the Thing designed from Watchfulness, even a providing and laying in against the Time to come, a making ready for our Departure, 'that' we may not be taken and surprized in an unfit Posture, in Consuson and Disorder as we wou'd be unwilling and ashamed to be found.

It very much consists and will express it self in the following Things. In Foresight, and considering the Nature and Tendency of Things; what is lawful, binding, necessary, and what sinful; and what the End and Issue of Things are like to prove. In reviewing our Actions, and passing just Censures and Restections on 'em: Daily remarking what has been amiss, and what right; what of Sin and what through Grace of an upright Heart; what to reproach our selves for and repent of, and what to praise God for, and to give us Peace and

^{*} Dr. Stillingfleet. + Dr. Tillotson.

Rejoycing in our felves. In Prayer with all Per-severance: Looking to God daily for his Keeping and Guidance, for his Pardon and Forgiv-nels of all that is amils, and for renew'd Supplies of Grace to prevent and fuccour and affift us always: Therefore these two Duties are often put together, Watch and Pray. In using the Means of Safety and Preservation: To Prayer it will joyn Reading, Hearing, Meditation in the Law of God, Self-examination, and a devout Attendance on all Divine Institutions. It does moreover produce Diligence, and makes a Man redeem and improve his Time. What the Hand finds to do. will be done with all the might, the very End of Watching being to discern what is Duty in order to perform it. Finally, It abides in all this, is a constant Caution, and to be daily renewed.
Tis the Work of the Life, as Soldiers in Garison keep Watch and Ward, Night and Day: for our Life is a Warefare, and we are always befet with Enemies; ever in a State of War, unless we defert Christ, and surrender our selves into the Hands of the Devil to be led Caprive by him at his Will. There must be no Negligence or Intermission of our Watch, because our Danger is always through our whole Life. Among Men one relieves another, and by Turns all take their Sleep; but the Christian Soldier is called to harder Duty; for as no Man's Watch can fave the Soul of his Brother, fo every Man must be always wakeful for his own Safety; and that equally in the First, or Second, or Third Watch, lest coming in either of them the Lord find us fleeping.

The Objects of the Duty, to which it extends, and about which it is conversant are, our Hars and Thoughts, Affections, Desires and Inward Metions: Keep thy Heart with all Diligence; for out of

it are the issues of Life (a). The Body also is to be kept under a strict Watch and Guard. The Eye is a dangerous Member, therefore Job made a Covenant with his Eyes (b), Lust is often kindled, the Soul fir'd thro' that Glass; it makes the Heart utter many a perverse thing when the Eye feeds on a tempting Object (c). Eve fell by looking on the fair forbidden Fruit, and so have many of her Sons and Daughters after her Example. A Man's Eyes are the Brokers for his Heart, fays one: The Feet run on the Errands of the roving Eye, and the Hands work hard to procure its Sight (d). The Mouth and Lips shou'd be kept as with a Bit and Bridle : Set a watch before the Door of my Lips (e): And Reason enough is there for a Guard here, for the Tongue is very often feen to be a World of Iniquity, and by our Words we shall be justified or condemned (f). Our Frames and State must be watch'd over; we must take beed lest there be in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief. and look diligently left we fail of the Grace of God (g). We must watch unto our Respective Duties, and the proper Seasons of them, and the Manner of the Performance of every Duty: As, when we are hearing the Word we must take beed bow we bear (b): Especially shou'd we watch unto the right Discharge of the Duties of our particular Relations, Trusts and Offices (i). This is a grand Point that takes up much of the Christian's Watch, what his present and peculiar Duty is, which is the most proper Season and Opportunity for it, and how it is to be discharged.

⁽a) Prov. 4. 23. (b) Job 31. 1. (c) Prov. 25. 28. (d) Eccl. 11. 9. (e) Pfalm 39. 1. 141. 3. (f) Jam. 3. 6. Mat. 12. 37. (g) Heb. 3. 12. 12. 15. (h) Luk. 8. 18. (i) Rom. 12. 7, 8.

To conclude, We are to watch against Sin, and every Appearance of it, and all Temptations to it (k): Be sober, be vigilant, for your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Take beed to your selves, lest at any time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life, and so that Day come

upon you unawares.

So far I have spoken of the Nature of the Watch here prescribed, it remains that I add something of the Necessity thereof, and our Obligation to obferve it. The most direct and convincing Evidence whereof is Scripture Precepts (1): And these are often repeated and inculcated, Let your Loins be girded about, and your Lights burning, and be ye your felves like unto Men that wait for their Lord : Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith: Let us not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober: Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his Garments. needs no more to convince us of our Obligation. and that it is both a necessary and acceptable Duty. It belongs to us to obey the Orders of our Leader, that we may please bim who bath chosen us to be Soldiers.

But God consults our Good and Benefit in this Commandment, together with his own Glory: Many a Dishonour to him, and Wound to our own Souls wou'd it prevent; it wou'd lade us with much good Fruit, and cause us to abound in good Works daily. 'Tis the Way to obtain much Grace by improving well what is already attained. The watchful Man is earnestly in quest of it, early and late looking out and seeking,

⁽¹⁾ Luk. 21. 34. 2 Epist of John v. 8. 1 Pet. 5. 8. (1) Luk. 12. 35-40. 1 Cor. 16. 13. 1 Thess. 5. 6, 10. Rev. 3. 2, 3. 16. 15.

losing no Season or Advantage for the getting it. and be that feeketh findeth. It confults the Soul's Peace, by guarding against the Stab of our Enemy; it wards off many a Blow, and prevents many a broken Bone with the Anguishes that wou'd follow. 'Tis indeed a laborious Care, but it is chearful in obeying, and makes it pleafant. It edifies others, by giving them a good Example, and provoking them to good Works: For the circumfpect Life of one Christian instructs and admonithes them that observe him; to see his Conversation is enough to awaken them. (Nor is the watchful Christian barely solicitous for his own Soul, but he is his Brother's Keeper, and watches for the Good of the Souls of his Neighbours: As indeed he is firrest to be made Keeper of the Vineyards that best keeps himself; he'll do his Duty best Abroad, who is so strict and faithful at Home, and from him a Reproof will come with most Authority and be best

Watchfulness defeats the Tempter when he affails us. When the Devil was very bufie and at the Height of his Power (for it was bis Hour) our Lord once and again inculcated this Counfel, Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation. If the good Man of the House is awake the Thief is discovered ere he breaks in. The Devil can't tempt with Advantage while we keep our Watch: His Opportunity is when he finds us Sluggish and Drowfing; we invite him to tempt us, and it is a Righteous Punishment of our Negligence if he have Power to hurt us. But if he affault us, and find us on our Watch Tower his Defeat is certain, he will be repulsed and vanquish'd; God will fearre us from his Malice; and tread him under our feet. As when one thinks to surprize his Enemy, but flies back faster than he came

on, when he finds him upon his Guard, and in a Posture of Fighting. The Devil always acts a cowardly Part: He never carry'd a Soul that did not lay himself open; his Strength lies most in Cunning and Treachery: He gives no Notice like a fair Enemy, of the Time and Place and Manner of his fighting: But as a base Foe that lucks in the Woods and privily shoots at the unwary Wanderer, fo is he. What is said of the Child is true of the Father, His Eyes are privily set against the Poor. But in wain is the Net spread in the Sight of the Bird; the sleepy Soul may be easily taken, but he that watches sees the Mischief in-

tended and provides against it. This Watchfulness is our Security in the midst of threatning Dangers; as a faithful Centinel it gives Notice of the Enemies Approach, and calls us to Arm. And to conclude, in all Respects it makes wonderful Dispatch toward Heaven. The wakeful Man lives apace, redeems his Life, neither fleeps nor faunters it away, but out-runs and is far a Head of others, whom he leaves loitering out of Sight behind him. As he that consumes least of his Time a Bed, has ordinarily much the more Work to show that he has done. Omy flow and lazie Heart, 'tis because I have been no more on my Watch, that so little has been done for God all my Life long! Otherwise how full of good Works, and laden with precious Fruit might my Life have been? This may suffice to say about the Nature and the Necessity of the Duty prescribed, namely Watchfulness.

II. It remains that I now speak to the Motive here used, to inforce the Exhortation or Command to this Duty; namely, for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. i. e. Our Ignorance of, and utter Uncertainty about about the Day of our Death, or the final Judgment, is a most powerful Reason why we shou'd all maintain a continual Watch. It is an Argument frequently used by the Holy Ghost of Take ye beed, watch and pray, for ye know not when

the Time is.

are utterly ignorant of the Times to come, and wholly in the Dark about the Periods of Persons and Things: of the most future Events by far we know nothing at all, and tho we are infallibly told of some sew, the most important and necessary to know of, yet the Times of these are hidden also: We know we must die, and we know that God has appointed a Day wherein he will judge the World; but if Man knoweth that which shall be, yet who can tell him when it shall be.

There is not any one Thing that Men are more in the Dark about, than the Time of their Deaths. Men's Days are indeed determin'd, the Number of their Months is with God, he has appointed their Bounds which they cannot pass; but the Secret is in God's Breast, nor is it possible to be known unless God do reveal it, or Men had the Knowledge of every Accident poffible to befall them through their whole Life in this World. Man knoweth not his Time (a): Ye know not what shall be on the Morrow: For what is your Life? It is even a Vapour, that endureth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away (b). We seldom make a right Guess about the Length or Shortness of our Lives: One builds on many Years, because he feems to be of a hail Constitution, of a hardy Make, and his Strength to be firm; but how

Mat. 24. 42, 44. Mark. 13. 33, 35. (a) Eccl. 9. 12. (b) Jam. 4. 14.

While another pines away whole Years successively under all the Symptoms and Apprehensions of dying every Month. Sometimes indeed God awfully informs Men of the Day and the Hour, by Sicknesses, or by the Ministers of his Justice; they feel their Breath going, or know that 'tis the Day of Execution which dawns upon 'em; but those are Ways of late Information, and dreadful to all.

Yet less can we guess at the Period of Time it self, and the Dissolution of all Things, having no such Measure hereof as we have of the Life of Men: *Of that day and hour knoweth no Man, no not the Angels of Heaven, but the Father only. If the Angels of Heaven have it not revealed to them, is it congruous for Man on Earth to expect it? Man, who was made lower than the Angels at first, and by Sin is fallen much lower than he was made. Nay, if the Knowledge of this Secret was not communicated to the Human Understanding of Christ himself, how much less shou'd we expect it to be revealed to us? For is the Disciple greater than his Lord? Is it not enough that the Servant be as his Master?

But to clear this Matter fully, and fatisfie every uneaffe Defire or Scruple about it, let me fay, 1. What we do know about the Time of the Coming of the Son of Man. 2. Why God has

not revealed to us more about it.

it, and has let us know in General, That it will not be before the End of the World (a): that we live in the last Days (b): that nevertheless there are many Things to be accomplished ere that

^{*} Marth. 24. 36. Mark 13. 32. (a) Marth. 13. 40. 2 Pet-3. 10. (b) 1 Cor. 10. 11. 1 John 2. 18.

Day arrives, Namely, the Fall of the Man of Sin from his prodigious Height and Power (e); a further Enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ. and the Conversion of the fews (d); a time also of the Church's Peace and Tranquillity, Purity and Holiness, beyond what has hitherto been known (e): and after that a great and General Defertion again (f); the Times of all which Changes no Man can proportion or adjust, nor however we may hope and think it probable that in what remains to be accomplish'd God will work in miraculous Ways and Manner, yet this also is fecret to him: We know moreover, that there are and will be extraordinary Signs and various Prodigies fore-running that Day, and admonishing the stupid World of its Approach (g); yet all too little to alarm Men; who will overlook and despise the fearful Presages, and be surpris'd in Security and Unbelief (b). This we do know of the Coming of the Son of Man.

2. If it be ask'd, Why the precise Time is hid from us, it is enough to fay, So the Wisdom of God will have it, so is his Soveraign Pleasure. Observe what Answer our Saviour did wouchfafe his Disciples with Respect to this Thing, It is not for you to know the Times or the Seasons, which the Father bath put into his own Power. May not God referve what he pleafeth to himself? Shou'd we dive into his Secrets? Heaven fees it unfit for us or any Creatures to be acquainted with Condition

Indeed it is a Thing not necessary for us to know, and in all likelyhood wou'd be very hurtful. What Good wou'd it do us to know the

^{(6) 2} Thess. 2. 10. (d) Rom. 11. 25. 2 Cor. 3. 16. (e) 2 Pet. 3. 13. (f) Luke 18. 8. Rev. 20. 7, 8. (g) Matth. 24. Luke 21. (h) Luke 17. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. precise

precise Time of the last Judgment? Of what Use wou'd it be to us? Wou'd it quicken us in our Watch? The very Reason why so much about it is made known to us and no more: God best consults this by keeping us ignorant of the Day and Hour, the Knowledge whereof we shou'd abuse. If the Knowledge of the Thing won't affect us, scil. that there will be a Judgment-Day, how shou'd the Knowledge of the Time when? To read this in the Rolls of Heaven were no more than to read that in the Book of God. Men that know not but they may die to Night, yet will not watch; how much less wou'd they, if they knew they were to live 20 Years to come? Men that know not but the Judge is at the Door, yet will not prepare to meet their Lord; how shou'd they then if they saw the Ages to pass ere he comes.

I say therefore, it wou'd be so far from being Useful and Beneficial to us to know the Times and Seasons which are kept hid from us, that it wou'd be hurtful and detrimental; a Temptation and Means of Security. The evil Servant wou'd fay in his Heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and wou'd begin to smite his Fellows, to eat and be drunken. It wou'd abate of the Terrors of the Judgment by fetting it at a greater distance; for distance of Time lessens the Object to the Minds of foolish Sinners; as distance of Place does to the Eye. God purposely conceals these Particulars, and his Mercy appears in this Conduct. The Uncertainty of the Time moves us to make it present, and calls upon us to be always ready.

Let this check a Criminal Curiofity to know the Things which God has kept secret. It shou'd teach us Modesty in our Enquiries after them, and Contentedness in our Ignorance of em. It is the

Vanity

Vanity and Pride of many that makes 'em pretend to talk knowingly about the inscrutable Things of God. It is both Sin and Folly, for God has both forbid it and made it impossible. Silly and mad Greatures, who wou'd break through the thick Darkness, to know what is hid within it! If the Children of Israel had done so at Sinai, what had they met but Thunders and Lightnings in their Way? Charge the People, said God to Moses, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and

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Some good Men have been too Curious and Positive in fixing the Periods of Revolutions that are prophecy'd of; and have been rebuk'd for their bold Conjectures, by living to fee themfelves confuted. Good Men are apt to overhaften that Day, agreeably to their own eager Wishes, and the longing of their Souls, Come, Lord fefus, come quickly. They that love the Lord and his appearing are ready to think that he can't come too foon, but it is an excess of Defire, which may be of very ill Consequence, leading us into Error, staggering the Faith of some, and hardening others in Infidelity, while it provokes their Scoffs. The Apostle foresaw this and strictly caution'd against fuch Eagerness, We befeech you, Brethren, by the coming of our Lord Fefus Christ, - that ye be not foon haken in Mind, nor be troubled, neither by Spirit, nor by Word, nor by Letter, as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand. It is a hazardous Point to be fanguine and confident in.

The finful Spirit of our First-Parents remains in their Posterity, I mean a lawless Desire of knowing more than God thinks meet for us. Were there a Tree of Knowledge yet, and the Fruit of it good to make one Wise in Things secret, we should all hanker after a Taste of it, tho forbidden under the Penalty of Death, and tho it were Ee 2 guarded

guarded by a flaming Sword. This baneful Weed ftole into Eden, and the Vineyard of God has hever fince been quite free from this Root of Bitterness. Some have fell into that Degree of Difcontent in their Ignorance of Futurity, that like. Saul they have gone to a Witch, tho only to know that they shall die to Morrow. Ungrateful Wretches such are to God, and distrustful of him : as well as injurious to themselves: for God has a Regard to our Happiness as well in the Things he hides from us, as in those that he reveals to us: He has let us know all that is necessary for us to know, in order to our ferving him here and enjoying him for ever; and what wou'd differve this bleffed End he has made it impossible for us to know. Certainly it well becomes us to think thus; for God who of his free Grace has discover'd so much to us, can't be thought to have with-holden the Knowledge of any Thing, that is suitable to our present State, or necessary to our future Well-being. But so much for the Proof and Reason of the Thing asferted. Dangering the Faith of fame, and a best for

2. I am to show that our utter Ignorance of the Day and the Hour, when the Son of Man cometh, is a powerful Argument why we shou'd maintain a continual Watch. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day, &c. The Force of which Mitive lies in two Things, scil. the Secrecy and Suddenness of the Coming of Christ; and both imply the fearful Hazard of a Surprize.

It is our Duty and Prudence to watch, because that Day and Hour may come secretly and unawares, stealing upon us as a Thief in the Night, coming as a Snare on all them that dwell on the Earth. And how speedy and sudden it may be we know not.

Matth. 24.43. Luke 21. 34, 35. 1 Theff. 5. 2.

As in the Destruction of the Old World, they knew not until the Flood came and took them all away. + For as the Lightning that lightnesh out of the one part under Heaven, hineth to the other part under Heaven, fo hall affor the Son of Man be in bis Day. So that there's great hazard of a Surprize; and certain Ruin in it; he then that neglects to watch is mad, and diffracted, and feems willing to perish. The Holy Ghost countenances and cherishes in us the Apprehension that the Day of our Account is near, even at the Door, and the first Chrifians found no Inconvenience therein : It help'd them through all the Scorns and Deaths which their Profession exposed them unto, and it wou'd invigorate us in Duty if we liv'd under the abiding Apprehension of it. Miserable and fortish is the evil Servant that makes a contrary Improvement of the Uncertainty of the Day of God, and fays, My Lord delayeth his coming : - the Lord of that Servant will come in a Day when he looketh not for him, and in an Hour when he is not aware, and will cut bim asunder. I want and made hand and

Watch therefore: For your own Judgment can't be far off; and what is it to us if the General Judgment-Day be many Ages off, fince the Day of our Death is certainly very nigh. A few Days more, and our State will be unalterably fix'd for Eternity. What does it benefit Judas that the Judgment is delay'd fo many hundred Years after his Time, fince he cou'd not outlive his Sin, but was fo hastily dispatch'd to his own Place. We ought always in our Thoughts to join the Judgment with Death, treading on the Heels of it. And then verily the Judge is at the Door, and we shou'd live as those that in a little time are sure of being before him.

[†] Matth. 24. 38, 39. Luke 17. 24.

Earth, yet were it unspeakable Folly not to watch; for else at long run we were sure of being Miserable, and the more so for ever, the longer our Respite is, and we sleep it away. And moreover, the Life may be long, yet the Day of Grace may not be equal; and then what wou'd many Years to come signifie, to be lost in a dead sleep? When we awake in Misery 'twill all seem as one short Hour of the Night; no more in Essect were we to remain on Earth to the last Period of Time and perish then.

But for the Encouragement of good Men let me add. That in a little Time they will be call'd off their Guard to an Eternal Rest, to a refreshing Sleep in the Bosome of Christ; and as the cool Shades and sweet Dews of the Evening are to one that has born the Heat of the Day, fo shall the Rest from their Labours be. How pleafant are those Words. | Bleffed are those Servants whom the Lord when he cometh fall find watching : Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them fit down to Meat, and will come forth and ferve them. And if he hall come in the fecond watch, or come in the third watch, and find them for bleffed are those Servants. But, on the other hand, how awful are those t, If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a Thief, and thou halt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Let Fear quicken your Vigilance; Samplon wou'd start up at the Name of a Philistine, tho' charm'd into found Sleep in his Tempter's Lap. Let Prayer affift your Watch: feek to Heaven for Aid when the Devil wou'd rock you affeep. He that faid

^{||} Luke 12. 37, 38. † Rev. 3. 3.

of the dead Damzel that she did but sleep, and taking her by the Hand she rose up, can raise us even from a dead Sleep in Sin, and keep us always wakeful. Finally, let daily Self-examination show that we are awake and on our Guard, allowing no flumber to our Eye-lids, till they are happily clos'd in Death: And let our peculiar Profession and Privileges be our constant Motive *, for ye Brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a Thief. Ye are all the Children of Light, and the Children of the Day : we are not of the Night nor of Darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be fober. - For God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain Salvation by our Lord Fesus Christ: Who died for us, that whether we wake or fleep, we shou'd live together with bim.

1 Theff. 5. 4, - 10.

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